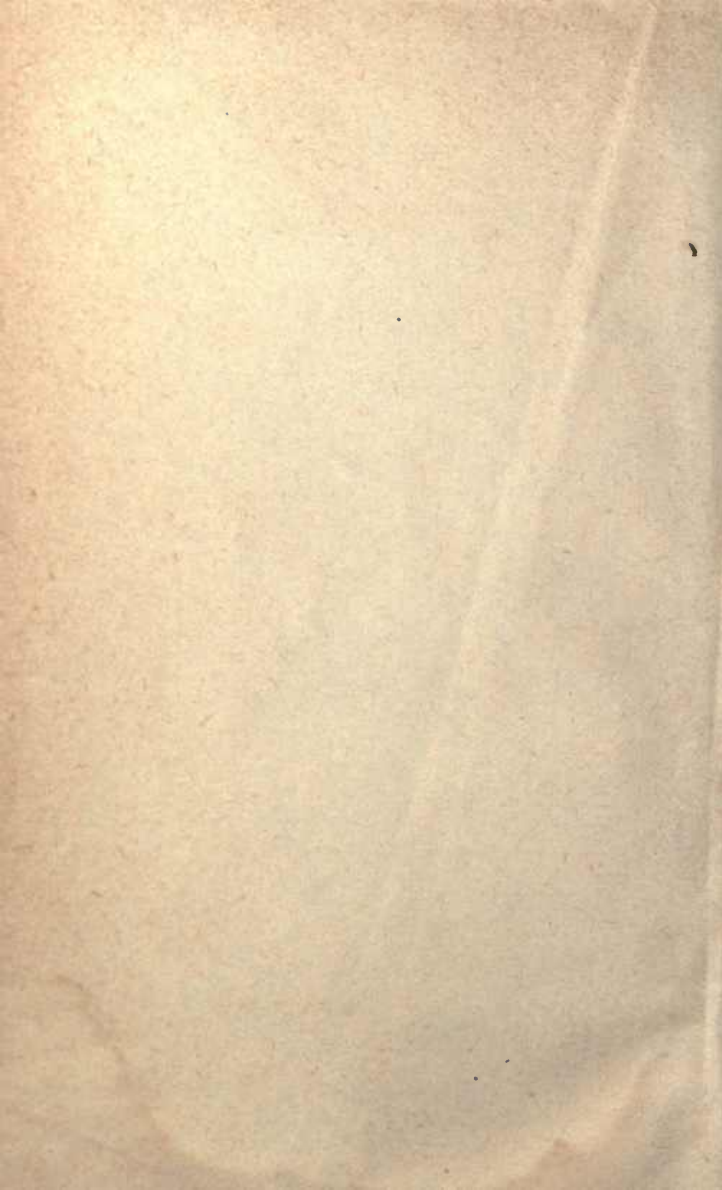




The
ITALIAN
Girl.

KATHERINE SEDGWICK WASHBURN.





THE
ITALIAN GIRL.

BY
KATHARINE SEDGWICK WASHBURN,
AUTHOR OF "INA."

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THE ITALIAN GIRL.

CHAPTER I.



LARGE tent had been raised in the outskirts of the city of New York. From within came a *mêlée* of sounds, loud laughter, the roar of beasts, the regular music of horse opera; horses were passing in and out of the tent, while a throng of most plebeian creatures, whom to look at made one loth to belong to the same race, were pressing forward and jostling one another without mercy.

"Have you not reserved seats?" said a young and elegantly dressed lady, one of a small party, to a gentleman by her side, who was evidently her husband.

"No; I inquired for them, but they were already taken."

"Let us go in quickly!" she said, her face lighting up; "I cannot help it, but I like everything belonging to horses; even in the dreary monotony of that music there is something that I half enjoy."

"Mary," she continued to a pretty girl just behind her, who was leaning on the arm of a young man, "keep close to us."

"Yes, Cecilia, I am here by your side."

"Oh," said Mrs. Brandon, another of the group. "how glorious this is; does it not remind one of the early Christians being brought into the arena at Rome? What grand virtues they displayed! How dimmed has faith become since then. They wrestled with the lions as once saints did with temptation; how herculean the task—how broad the platform!"

Mrs. Elliot, the lady who had first spoken, and Mary looked slyly at one another.

"By Jove," said Mr. Phillips, "I do not see much wrestling here; those animals are not commonly called beasts, Mrs. Brandon; they are horses!"

"Yes, that is a noble steed, indeed!" said Mrs. Brandon, pointing to an ordinary trained horse that had just entered the ring.

"Oh, here comes the wild Indian, no doubt to ride a bare-backed horse; that is the common programme!" said Mr. Phillips. "How delightful," turning to Mary, "the Cirque de l'Impératrice was! That was really worth seeing—beautiful women and beautiful horses!"

"The Cirque was patronized by her Majesty the gracious Eugénie," said Mrs. Brandon; "I know it well; in fact, just before the death—so sudden, that it took away all our breaths, and we paused before the flush of life came flooding back over our party—the death, I mean, of poor Grey, who watched with such interest my career in Europe, we passed through Paris, and went to the Cirque de l'Impératrice together; it was indeed imperial—Cæsarian!"

The poor Indian rode around amid the plaudits of the mob, but elicited little attention from our party.

"Signorina Rosa" was then announced, "from the

island of Sardinia, but trained in England, of the true English school! She will ride her thorough-bred, presented to her by his Majesty Victor Emmanuel, during his brief visit to the metropolis of London! She has won applause and honor wherever she has ridden, and the diamond which she wears on the forefinger of her right hand is a gift from her royal Majesty Victoria!"

"Hallo!" said Mr. Elliot, "that is an advertisement for you, Phillips! You always had a liking for pretty *equestriennes*!"

"Ah, yes, I grant you—in Paris," said Phillips; "but it is different here, you know!" The music for a season ceased, and the clown rehearsed some of his stereotyped jokes. Presently the music began again; there was a little bustle among the ushers, and then a beautiful black horse trotted proudly into the circle. "How splendid! grand! magnificent!" rose in chorus from the crowd. Just after it, ran in La Signorina Rosa. She was dressed in rose-colored silk, looped over a white ruffled muslin, caught up with large French roses; there was a rose in the corsage of her dress, another fastened in the broad bands of her hair, rolled simply about her delicately shaped head. She kissed her hand to the spectators with a nonchalant air, and half disdaining the proffered help of the usher, sprang upon the horse. She walked him slowly round the circle, and then leaped to her feet. There was a quick murmur of applause.

"By Jove," cried Mr. Phillips, "she is a beauty indeed!"

"She is hard to match, I fancy, Mr. Phillips, in any of your foreign cities!" said Mr. Elliot.

Mrs. Elliot flushed to her temples.

The Signorina Rosa held a rose-colored scarf, which floated like a rainbow above her.

Resting on one foot, she stood for some moments poised in an attitude of exquisite grace; then dropping the reins, and crossing her feet, she rode standing, with folded arms; then dropped into the saddle and walked her horse. As she passed our little coterie, they had time to scan her face and form. She was rather *petite*, her nose was delicate, her eyes dark and flashing, her head very small and beautifully set on her shoulders, her eyebrows were penciled; under her eyes were dark lines, so deeply marked that they might have been painted.

Mary turned to Cecilia, and said in a whisper, "Do you see the ring, how it sparkles? I wonder if Victoria really gave it her. It looks as if it might be the gift of a queen."

Just at this moment the clown came over to where the young girl's horse was standing.

"What is the matter with our pretty Miss?" he said. "Is our Rose tumbling to pieces? Oh, its foot!" for she pointed to it. "Does it hurt it?" While he said this, he touched her foot with his hand, and our party saw a look of rage flash out of her eyes as she drew it quickly away. With a quick jerk at the bridle, she made her horse rear. "Bruno, Bruno," she said, in a low voice, "steady!" The animal stood quite still again. She rode slowly round the circle while the men were stretching across part of the ring some broad banners. When she saw these were ready, she made an imperious sign with her hand, leaped to her feet, and, in a

moment more, at the first round had cleared all four of them.

"Brava!" shouted Mr. Phillips, laying special stress on the "*va.*" The young girl turned her face and gave him a most radiant smile; it was not a conventional circus-smile, but seemed to light her face all over, which before had looked dark, almost Moorish. At the same instant her eye fell on the pale, earnest face of a young man who sat near our friends. He was leaning forward watching her motions eagerly. She colored; then she smiled again; she bent down over Bruno, patted him, and jumping lightly to the ground, courtesied low, turning scornfully from the clown's extended hand. There was an intermission of ten minutes, to be followed by some gymnastic exercises; the Greek acrobat; a *tour de force* by the celebrated Monsieur Auguste Legrand, and then "the Signorina Rosa would exhibit her horse Bruno, trained by herself with all her native grace!"

"Let us go and smoke," said Mr. Phillips; "do not look so sentimental, Livingstone, about that girl! I don't believe she is worth wasting that sort of thing on. She's devilish pretty, though. Will you join us?"

"No, thank you," said Mr. Livingstone, with a smile. "I think I will stay and protect the ladies."

Elliot and Phillips disappeared through an opening in the tent, where Mrs. Elliot's eyes followed them with intense interest.

"Dear Henry," she said, turning to her sister Mary, "he is so good, so true; he would scarcely look at that girl—only he humors Mr. Phillips in his follies. She is pretty, poor thing! and she looks something higher than her profession; it would be quite interesting to

study their lives more nearly. Just think, my dear!" she added, shuddering, "of being always thrown among those coarse, common creatures!"

"Oh," said Mrs. Brandon, who had listened to the last part of her sentence, "of course the more exquisite fibres of their natures are quite crystallized; they have no ambient like ours to move in; she enters a butterfly, but she comes out a worm. There is Mrs. Peter Mott! how very splendid she looks! One sees the queen of society in her every attitude. She is grand, lustrous!"

Cecilia turned her glass where she saw Mrs. Brandon bowing with a patronizing air, and beheld Mrs. Mott. "I think she looks very coarse," said Cecilia, "and, after all, she plays rather a low part in the world. If that little Signorina Rosa were in her place, she would appear infinitely more lady-like! What has Mrs. Mott grasped at but a position in fashionable society? Everybody frequents her drawing-room, it is true, but everybody laughs at her. The price she has paid is her dignity and self-respect, and her meed is cold contempt. Her money has gilded her position, but has deluded no one."

"I do not know what you mean," said Mrs. Brandon; "she has conquered her place by the force of her intellect. She married a man who must have been detestable from the beginning to one of her grand nature!"

"Why did she marry him, then?" asked Cecilia, quietly.

"With her beauty," continued Mrs. Brandon, "and her personal gifts and advantages, money was a necessity. I asked her one day how she had escaped the play of the passions, with her splendid nature, and she

burst into tears, and said, ‘Sophronia, that opens a new chapter in my life.’”

“I know nothing of the passions,” said Cecilia, with a cold smile, “and they have little interest for me.”

“There,” said Mrs. Brandon, “is Mrs. Lawrence, too; one meets all the *élite* here. I believe I will tell her not to powder so much. I have been so kind to her that she will listen to me.”

Cecilia secretly marveled what need Mrs. Lawrence had of Mrs. Brandon’s kindness, being herself wealthier than the latter, and in quite as fashionable a circle.

“Why, here is Henry behind us,” she said, her face beaming with a smile of welcome, “how long have you been there?”

“How like Mr. Livingstone is to Hamlet in his appearance,” said Mrs. Brandon; “he seems to me the embodiment of his soliloquy; but, perhaps, these are but ‘the trappings and the suits of woe.’ What a sweet girl he is talking with; Miss Alcott, is it not? quite a histrionic face. Our ambassador at London wrote me the other day; his account of the English girls was quite amusing. He says they all look like so many cherries on one stalk.”

“That is well done,” said Mr. Elliot, as he watched the *tour de force* of Monsieur Auguste. “I will tell Hamlet to applaud; he may call that ‘a hit, a palpable hit!’”

“How delightful your husband is, Mrs. Elliot, so full of wit; it is not *feu d’artifice* brilliancy, but true coruscations of light. It must be delightful to live with him?”

“It is,” said Cecilia, “for he is good as he is clever.”

"A gentleman told me the other day," said Mrs. Brandon, "that he thought he had a very encyclopædic mind!"

"Oh, isn't she sweet?" exclaimed Miss Alcott, who was seated by our Hamlet. The music had begun to play again, and Signorina Rosa had just entered, mounted *à l'Amazone*. She wore a long black velvet habit, a black hat like a man's, white gauntlets, a little blue cravat; on her skirt was embroidered a large cross of Savoy, in blue and gold. Her seat was perfect; she seemed to have grown tall during her brief absence, so delicate yet so commanding was her figure, as she swayed gracefully to and fro with the different paces of her horse. She passed our corner of the circus, where every eye was intent upon her, and raised her lids just once as she came opposite Mr. Livingstone; it was not a bold glance, but a mixture of daring and coquetry. She encountered the same earnest gaze as before.

"Do you see," said a gentleman who sat near them, in an audible voice, "she wears the emblem of the house of Savoy? That horse may be a keepsake from Victor Emmanuel! He has a new lady-love every day, and very likely she has shared that honor with others."

Rosa heard him; her face flushed almost purple.

"It is false!" she said, in a low, clear undertone. Her short upper lip curled as she spoke, while on the under lip her small teeth closed sternly down. A sharp pull at her rein, and Bruno's nostrils dilated; he made one plunge—then reared! She held him for a moment in that posture, and bent her head with a glance of triumph toward Mr. Livingstone.

"She favors you, Livingstone," said Mr. Phillips, *sotto*

voce, "women both in high and low life are taken with those pale faces. They suggest a good deal more than their owners mean—the deuce take them."

Some bars were brought in.

"Hallo! what's the girl going to do? Leap them, by Jove. That will be a good leap; why, I should say they were six feet high."

"No, not more than four and a half," said Mr. Elliot; "but she hasn't room for a long swing before she comes up to them!"

Rosa raised her finger slightly, and the music struck up; the horse looked restive.

"Bet," said Mr. Phillips, "what will you bet she clears them?"

"I am not in the habit of betting," said Mr. Livingstone, "but I don't mind backing her for a hundred dollars." Rosa was walking her horse near them, and heard the conversation.

"I take it," said Phillips.

She put her horse to a quick trot, and touching him lightly with the whip, "Up, Bruno! up!" Her voice rang sharp and clear, and in a moment she had cleared both the bars.

"By Jove, well done!" said Mr. Phillips. "I don't regret the money, Livingstone."

Rosa was just then passing; she looked up triumphantly, and smiled.

"Good Bruno, my Bruno!" she said, patting the horse's neck. "Once more, and then good night!"

She drew in her horse till he reared again. Twice she made him leap; then, bowing, trotted him out of the ring.

"There is nothing more worth seeing here; let us go to the menagerie," said Mr. Phillips. There was a crowd behind them and in front, and they could not pass.

"This way, ladies," said the usher. "If you will go round by the stables, you will find it easy to reach the other tent."

"Thank you," said Cecilia. Passing round toward the rear of the tents, they found Rosa standing near one of the stalls and quite unmindful of their approach. She was stooping toward her horse and kissing him on his nose. They stopped to watch her. The clown was beside her; he placed his arm round her waist, and they heard him say,

"It's a pity, Miss Rosa, to waste your kisses on a horse; kiss me instead!"

She turned on him, her face almost black with rage, and raising her whip:

"Take your hands off me, you low-born clown! you painted idiot! you ugly devil! go away, or I will horse-whip you!"

"Splendid!" said Mr. Phillips, but she did not hear or see him. Our party passed on.

"Oh!" said Cecilia, "I pity her. How disgusting that man looked!"

"She is too sweet for anything," said Miss Alcott, who had Mr. Livingstone's arm.

"Sweet is not precisely the word," he said, smiling; "she seems a spirited creature, far above her surroundings certainly. It made one really sad to see her there, with no one to protect her."

"Strong in innocence as in triple mail!" said Mrs.

Brandon, sweeping by loftily with a toss of the head. "Let us look at this splendid creature from the African soil. He is as dusky as his desert airs, and would crush out our souls with one tramp of his mighty foot."

"Who feeds them?" said Cecilia, turning to one of the keepers.

"I do," answered a dapper youth, with a cheerful, glowing countenance. "Mr. Cinizelli hain't nothing to do with it; oh, no, not he," he continued, with a gratulatory chuckle in his throat. "He conducts the business like a gentleman. Where other men has one turn-out, he has four. Oh, yes, he has the finest carriage in New York."

"Is he married?" asked Miss Alcott, laughing.

"Oh, yes," replied the youth.

"Does Madame Cinizelli ride in the ring?"

"No, indeed, not she; she ain't one of that kind. She wouldn't ride in the ring for thousands. She's still and quiet, and don't speak to no one, unless they speak to her."

"Proud and haughty," suggested Phillips.

"Oh, no, she ain't neither," he answered, with the same animated chuckle.

"Do you like this business?"

"Yes, better than anything in the world; oh, yes! I takes care of the animals in winter, and in summer I drives out the ladies. That's the cage for the giraffe! but there ain't no giraffe—oh, no! There come out one, and they took him in the wessel; they put in leaves, those sort of leaves the giraffe feeds on, you know."

"The mimosa," suggested Mrs. Brandon.

"Well, I don't know what you call 'em, but they got

sort of stale, and he died. Well, what did Mr. Cinizelli say when he heard he was dead? Well, he said just nothing! 'What's eight thousand to me?' He don't think nothing of eight thousand—oh no, not he!" with the same approving laugh as he enumerated the proofs of Cinizelli's recklessness in respect of the base metal. "We had one giraffe up to Omaha, that's a long way beyond Chicago—yes, Omaha! Well, he died, too. Miss Rosa used to go in, and I seen her wiping off the leaves when she fed him, so as they might be quite clean; the cage was padded, so as not to let in a breath of air, but he couldn't stand the climate, so we put something on him when he was dead, that he might not smell, and I took him on to Philadelphia; but his bones came through—oh, yes—and so he wasn't of no use, oh no! Now, Mr. Cinizelli says, well, he says, if he had a giraffe give him for fifty dollars, he wouldn't take it. It makes me feel sort of bad, you know, because the people comes in, and they looks at the cage, and they says, 'What's that for?' and I says, 'For the giraffe, but he died on the wessel,' and then they sort of laughs. They think I'm lying, oh, yes! Miss Rosa—she cried when they took away the giraffe up to Omaha; but I can't say nothing. I can't tell you any of these things."

"Is Miss Rosa a good girl?" inquired Miss Alcott, much interested in the youth's lively discourse.

"Well, now, I should think she was," he said, chuckling again. "Oh, my eye! if she ain't mad sometimes. We ain't afraid of her much, oh, no! but I think Mr. Cinizelli is. She makes him stand around, and he says she's got too big ideas for that small ring

she rides in; she struck the keeper of the elephant over his face once, didn't she? oh, yes!"

"Why did she do that?"

"Served him right; he made love to her. But she always spoke sort of kind to me. She's made Mr. Cinizelli an awful lot of trouble—oh, yes! There's always young men hanging around since she came, and she tells him to shove 'em off; but he says he can't do it, it ain't no easy job!"

"Good-night," said Miss Alcott.

"Good-night," answered the youth, in his cheery voice.

"Oh," said Miss Alcott, "how sad it is to see that poor hyena always rattling his chain! I should think it would make Mrs. Cinizelli nervous enough, if she ever came here to see it."

"Yes," said Livingstone, "it seems like one of Dante's fearful representations; a conscience loaded with the vices of earth, and finding no rest from endless remorse."

"That young keeper," said Cecilia, "shows all the enthusiasm for Miss Rosa of a youthful Mortimer for Mary Queen of Scots."

"Chastelard, you mean, my dear; that is her modern admirer."

"Oh, Henry, dear! how can you say such dreadful things?" said Cecilia.

"Her type is Andalusian," said Mrs. Brandon.

"Whose—Mrs. Cinizelli's?"

"No; the young girl's who rode."

"She has a Cashmerian look," said Cecilia.

"She has certainly the finest ankle, the prettiest foot,

and the whitest hand, for so dark a person, I ever saw," said Mr. Phillips. "Let us come again to-morrow night, Elliot! and you, Livingstone, will you complete the trio?"

"No, thank you," said Livingstone.

"Henry, you will not be so foolish?" whispered Cecilia.


"No; of course not, my dear."

While the party which had just left the circus was discussing the Signorina, where was she? She had retired for the night, in a room on the third story of a boarding-house in the Third avenue. There she sat on a little cot bed, her eyes red with weeping.

"Oh, I cannot bear it," she murmured, "the nasty, gross man! I will kill him, if he touches me again!" and she bit her lip with her pretty white teeth until the blood came. "Oh, why was I not born rich, like those great ladies who come to stare and laugh at me. They would scorn to take my hand, and yet it is as small as theirs, and has done no menial work," and she looked down at her little hand that was doubled up half in menace, "and I'm sure it is as innocent! I should like to run away and hide, to spite old Cinizelli, and I will, too!" she cried, her breath coming quicker. "Yes, I will play them all some trick yet. It would do me good to wound them all! But then," she paused suddenly, "how could I send her money? and she depends upon me for her livelihood; and although she brought me into a world of misery, yet I must help her to live—she is still my mother. My God!" she said, lifting her eyes to heaven—"I do not believe there is a God, or he would not leave me to such a terrible life. I hate it, I

hate the men, I hate everybody—all but Bruno. I love Bruno better than anything on earth. But that man said that the king—oh,” she continued, while the blood mounted to her brow, “they all lie! they lie! and love to spit upon me, because I am a poor girl. I do not believe they could do what I do, or resist what I resist. Oh, I am so wretched!” and she flung herself down on the bed, and at last cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER II.

HE next morning, when Rosa woke from her troubled sleep, she found it was already late. She rubbed her eyes. Was there not to be a special rehearsal that day for a cotillion of horses, to be introduced the next week? She undressed hastily (for she had thrown herself on the bed in the dress she had worn home), and pouring water into a large tub, prepared herself for her bath; it was the one luxury she insisted on. While she was thus occupied, she heard a rap.

“Who’s there?” she called out, drawing instinctively her gown tighter about her.

“It’s me, Miss Rosa!”

“Go away immediately!” she said, angrily, raising her voice, “I cannot see you!”

“But I have got to speak to you, Miss Rosa; and it’s a message from Mrs. Cinizelli, and she wants you to drive out with her at one o’clock; and there’s a bunch of roses a young gentleman gave me for you!”

“Leave them before the door, and go away! Tell Madame Cinizelli I accept her kindness with gratitude.”

“I have put them on the mat, Miss Rosa!”

“Go away, I say!” She listened to his retreating steps, and then moved on tip-toe to the door, and, open-

ing it noiselessly, peeped out; but, just as she stooped down to take up the roses, she saw the clown's head disappearing down the stairs.

"The fool!" she muttered, and slammed to the door. "It was kind of him, though, to bring me the flowers!"

"Oh, how sweet these roses smell," she said, crushing them up to her little nose; "they tell of a fresher and brighter life! How I should like to be a rose, and exhale my fragrance on the breast of some beautiful belle; yes, just as her lover was telling her his secret, I would shed out all my sweetness, and die with a tale of true love in my ear! or I would bloom in the country; the breeze would caress my leaves; the birds drink the dew from my chalice; and the golden butterflies pay their court to me. - I should be born in the morning, and at night I should have passed away, but I should have known one long day of happiness, and at least I should have been the equal of all the other roses."

She continued her toilette, still talking to herself. At length, putting on a plain dress of black silk, and a little round hat, she went down stairs to her breakfast. It was a frugal meal—two eggs, a piece of bread, and a cup of tea. Then she hurried out. As she drew near the corner, a man came forward, and lifting his hat respectfully, said—

"May I not have the honor of accompanying you?"

He was dressed with elegance, and had the air of a finished gentleman. Now, Rosa was alone in the world, and had no one to take care of her; looking up, she scanned his features gravely—then smiled, and said:

"I do not think that you mean to be impertinent. I am so lonely among all these people, that—perhaps I

am imprudent—I feel almost grateful for the privilege of speaking to one who looks like a real gentleman! I saw you last night at our circus—I noticed all of you! Indeed, I see everything even in that great crowd, and I seem to hear everything, too.”

She spoke with such simplicity, and looked up in his face so earnestly, that for a moment his coarser nature was silenced, and he replied, quietly:

“I must introduce myself to you—my name is Phillips. You ride beautifully; I have never seen any one I admired so much on horseback. Your horse is magnificent.”

“Is he not beautiful?” she said, her face kindling.

“I am told he is your own,” he continued. “I have been talking with Mr. Cinizelli this morning. I was waiting with impatience to see you. He says that there are other horses you exhibit in similar feats, that are quite as well trained. Now, I want to make you an offer: I will give you five thousand dollars in gold for that horse—Bruno, I think you call him?”

“My horse! my beautiful Bruno!” she cried, all the color leaving her cheek; “why, sir, I love Bruno better than anything in life! He is all I have to love, and he loves me as dearly; he is my only friend!” The great tears stood in her eyes, “No, not if you were to offer me all the world, would I part with Bruno.”

They walked on in silence; then he said:

“Perhaps you will think better of my offer, when you have reflected on it over night. I wished to ask you, also, if you would not do me the favor to dine with me and two friends of mine. As I see your name is not on the bill for to-morrow, will you not favor us to-morrow

evening? We will call for you with a carriage, and go to Delmonico's."

The young girl's face brightened again.

"I should like it of all things. I am sure you will not bring any rude men. Because I ride in a circus, people seem to think that I have no soul."

They had now reached the entrance to the circus.

"I will show you a fine horse, one belonging to Mr. Cinizelli," she said, as they entered the door. "I dare say you will like him better than Bruno; he is just as well trained—I taught him myself."

"Yes, but to me Bruno has the advantage of being your friend."

Rosa smiled, colored slightly, and shook her head.

"You cannot have Bruno," she said.

As they entered, they saw Mr. Cinizelli standing near the stalls. He touched his hat to the Signorina, and said in French:

"You are late; we want you to practice the cotillion."

"I will only try it on Bruno," she answered, in the same tongue.

"Well, he is saddled—spring up!"

While Mr. Cinizelli was showing the good points of his horse, Rosa retired to a small inclosure that did duty for a green-room. As she stepped out from under the curtain, which divided it from the rest of the tent, there stood the clown, with a most piteous face. He looked so wretched that Rosa felt a twinge of pity. She stopped and said:

"What is the matter with you, George?"

There was a note of sympathy in her voice that the

poor clown had never heard before, and he looked at her beseechingly, as he said :

“ Oh, Miss Rosa, do stop one minute ; the gentleman is talking about the horses, and he won't mind ! Do, Miss Rosa, stay here for one moment ! I shall go mad, if you don't listen to me. These young men ought not to be coming around you ; they don't mean any good.”

“ That is my affair,” said she, haughtily, and waved her hand, as if bidding him let her pass, but he caught her by her skirt, and said in a voice of agony,

“ Oh, Miss Rosa ! ”

There was something so comic in the clown's face at this moment, divested as it was of its brighter splashes of color, with only two dark lines drawn down from the corners of his mouth, and black eyebrows meeting in a point above, like a thatched gable, that Rosa burst out laughing. Her gay laugh rang for a minute through the tent, and attracted Mr. Phillips' ear. He moved toward the sound, and, still hidden behind some projecting canvas, paused to listen. 'Twas a pleasant thing to hear the young girl's laugh—so silver and clear, you would not have believed the heart it pealed from had ever known a sorrow ; but it did not cease naturally ; it broke off abruptly in the middle of a note, like a music-box that had run down without completing its tune.

“ Miss Rosa,” said the clown, in imploring tones, “ don't laugh ; it makes me sad ! All day and all night I have to play the fool, and pretend to be gayer than other folks, when my heart is breaking ! You know I worship you, Miss Rosy ! I would give my life to marry you ! I haven't got much worldly goods—only this cap

and bells—but I'll work for you, and take you out of this mean place, and, if I could, I'd put you on a throne, and lie down before it, and let you trample on me, if that would give you pleasure."

"How dare you talk so to me?" she said, angrily; "how dare you ask me to marry you, you low-born man? Why, what can you think of me?" she continued, throwing back her head proudly. "My father was an English nobleman, whose stirrup you are not worthy to hold!" Her nostrils quivered. "Let me pass, I say, and if I hear you again, ever again, talk such audacious nonsense, I will use my whip on you, sir! Yes, I will!"

"Miss Rosy," said the poor clown, "I dare say your father was noble; one sees it all over you; but your mother, who was she?"

"Take care," said Rosa, "take care. My mother was—my mother was—she was a Sardinian, sir." Her voice choked, and she burst into sobs. "Let me pass, I say!"

He put out his hand as if to detain her. In a moment Mr. Phillips was at her side and had struck the clown across the face. The clown staggered, and before he had time to recover himself, the voice of Monsieur Cini-zelli was heard calling loudly,

"Come along! come, come, Mademoiselle! I cannot wait any longer; I wish my exercise done. When I say my exercise be done, all ze ladies come and ze wait zis half hour, and ze all wear ze short skirt, but you must have your airs alway!"

Rosa and Mr. Phillips moved toward the circle. There Bruno stood looking quietly around as if seeking his mistress.

"I am here, darling," she whispered, and, placing her

foot in the stirrup, she sprung to the saddle. He tossed back his head as if proud of his light burden, and she guided him into the ring, where were six men and five women already mounted; they made place for her, and she immediately took the lead. Motioning the music to begin,—

“This way,” she said.

“Yes, yes, *comme ça! c’est bien!*” shouted Mr. Cini-zelli. “Splendid rider, zat girl!” He turned to Mr. Phillips, “and good girl, too, she! she keeps ze place for herself.”

“If you speak in French,” said Mr. Phillips in that language, “I shall understand you perfectly.”

“Then I will tell you,” he said, “that the girl knows how to keep herself straight. She does not permit any familiarities; my wife says she is a real lady, only she has such a temper,” he added, laughing. “When she first came to me, she was so young and pretty, that I thought it was a pity to let her go to the devil, so I kept my eye on her; but I soon saw she did not need it. Some day, if she gets a rich, good fellow to be liberal to her—why, she will deserve it, sir!”

Mr. Phillips was watching the young girl as she glided through the cotillion, swaying her horse with an easy rein; she never spoke to her companions, save to give some order, and that was done quietly but imperiously, as if the sooner the work was over the better. At length the exercises were finished, and she turned Bruno to where Mr. Phillips was standing.

“Now I am free!” she said, and jumped from her horse, just touching the hand he offered her. “Wait

one moment, Mr. Phillips, and I will come. Please wait there."

While Phillips was talking with Rosa, he had observed the men and women of the circus winking at one another, and heard now and then a burst of coarse laughter from the men. This excited in him an earnest desire to strike them. Unable, however, to indulge this amiable feeling, he turned on his heel, and disregarding Rosa's request, walked off to the menagerie, which filled a separate tent. He was looking at the lion when he heard a step behind him—it was the clown's; his appearance was more hideous than ever, now that one of his eyes was swollen and nearly closed by the blow he had received.

"Sir," said the clown, "you are a gentleman, I know, and I ain't much; but I made an honorable offer to that girl, and that was as much as any gentleman could do. I don't want to touch you; not that I am afraid—I play the fool, but not the coward! But if you mean right by her, I don't want to hurt you. Perhaps you don't mean nothing, but that ain't likely, because she's too handsome; but I won't have her wronged, and left to misery and shame. You heard what she said about her mother, and I just stepped out to tell you, sir, that I don't bear you no malice for what you did to me—it was all natural enough, as seeing what she is, and what I am, to one of your sort and education; but if you mean wrong to her, gentleman as you are, I shall give you a blow for the one you gave me—that's all! I shall kill you, I don't care if I am hanged for it afterward; so, sir, you look to what you do, and I will look to what I do."

Rosa was coming, and he moved away.

"I must hurry;" she said. "I have an engagement to drive with Madame Cinizelli. She is a good, gentle little woman, not like the rest, and I like her—she is kind to me."

Mr. Phillips walked with her to the door, and lifting his hat,—

"To-morrow, then, at six o'clock," he said, "I shall have the pleasure of calling for you!"

"To-morrow, then," she answered, smiling, and ran in.

That evening, when Rosa rode, she saw Mr. Phillips in the front row, but she saw, also, a pair of dark eyes directed on her from another quarter of the house, quite hidden from Mr. Phillips' view. Rosa smiled at them once as she rode by that corner of the ring.

The clown was not himself that evening. Rosa's heart smote her when she saw him so depressed, yet forced to go on repeating his jokes. These, however, seemed to charm the pit as much as ever, and the shrill voices of childhood chorused approval.

"Jolly fellow, ain't he?" shouted a little boy with a round, hearty laugh.

"He is the funniest clown I ever saw," answered another, almost annihilated by pleasure.

Rosa cast a glance at the clown, who had not dared to approach her; she even let fall her whip, to give him the satisfaction of picking it up, but he took no notice of it. She saw his poor mouth wince as he sang his song; he tried to smile, but looked far more like crying. All this passed with his audience as a proof of his superior gifts for comedy. There were but two persons who

appreciated his feelings—Rosa and Mr. Phillips, who had heard more of her morning's colloquy with the clown than she supposed. When she had ceased riding there was to be a display of gymnastics, and as the clown's services were not required, he remained behind the scenes. Rosa watched her opportunity when the rest of the performers were peeping through the curtain at the scene within, and approaching the poor fellow, who leant dejectedly against one of the stalls, said in a low voice :

“George, I am sorry I spoke so roughly to-day, it was unkind in me. I know myself what pain is, and I cannot bear to see you suffer; I am so sorry that the gentleman struck you. I like you; you are good and kind-hearted; and yet I have always been rude to you; but I hope you will forgive me, and think no more about it; all this evening your face has been a reproach to me! Do not talk to me, or trouble me again, and then I shall always think well of you, and—and”—it was a hard thing for Rosa to say—“and be grateful to you.”

The man's face lighted; he forgot, for the moment, that he was a miserable clown, earning a small stipend and a suit of harlequin clothes for producing jests of a grade low enough to hit an ignorant audience. He put his hand to his heart as if he were in pain. In the morning Rosa would have laughed, but now she felt a tear moisten her eye.

“Oh, thank you, Miss Rosa! you have taken such a load off here; I felt as if I should suffocate in there, and yet I knew that if I did not go through it I should lose my wages, and then what would become of my poor

mother? But you have forgiven me, and I don't mind anything now; I'll never trouble you again. I'll only just say one thing, and then I'll never speak again—I think you're angel, Miss Rosa!"

CHAPTER III.

HOW late dear Henry is to night," said Cecilia Elliot to her sister, the evening of the following day, "He did not say he should not return to dine. I hope he will remember that we are to have company this evening ; but if he does forget it, it will be because he is so pressed with business."

"Yes," said Mary, petulantly, "he thinks of nothing but business. I am so tired of this money-making. What is the aim of it all?—to lay up store for an uncertain future. It seems man's whole ambition to build a tomb of stone to inter his soul, while his wretched body crawls through its allotted term as best it can. We are not half so lofty in our aims as the old Egyptians ; they, at least, built for the body's preservation, and let their souls fly forth, asking not whither they went."

"You are wrong," said Cecilia, with a grieved expression, "to talk thus. Money is a great power ; it is the rich blood that swells the veins of our country's commerce ; it lends wings to civilization ; it fosters art and literature ; it gives us the advantage of travel ; procures us luxuries, elevates our tastes, enlightens our minds and affords us the greatest of pleasures—generosity."

"Now, Cecilia, that is very eloquent, and has, I grant, a trace of truth, but I am sure it is radically false ! You will always look at everything through your own lens.

Just get a telescope for once, and take a large view of life as it is. See this love of money, like a great weed, choking all wholesome growth. Is there room in our land for one flower of genius to push its way? Would it not be trampled under foot? Listen to all the people of note in society; watch them when a stranger comes to town, pointing out our celebrities! What do they say? Is it such a one leads a noble life; that man yonder has sacrificed his all for the poor; this is a student; the other a scholar; here is a philosopher. No, they tell you that this man is enormously rich! Do you not know him? why, he is the wealthiest person in our community. And there is Mr. B., he has an income of two hundred thousand, and his wife is the leader of fashion."

"You are very foolish to talk in this way," said Cecilia; "without money, what would become of all those great institutions for the poor—of St. Luke's, for instance, or our Orphans' Home? Look at Peter Cooper and Mr. Peabody, what have they not done for the people? Are not their charities noble?"

"One swallow does not make a summer," returned Mary, "and I repeat, I think all these riches have a lowering and materializing effect upon our nation; she is prosperous beyond all countries, I grant that; she is full of inventive faculty, acute, intelligent, but what more? Where is she to look for her immortality?"

"In her grand principle of equal rights," said Cecilia, with emotion; "in her love of freedom, in her lives lavished for the truth when she wiped out with the blood of her sons the only stain on her shield."

"Well, that merits all praise!" said Mary; "that is

the one thing I am proud of. But noble acts, unless they are the parents and children of noble thoughts, have little value. The word is God. In a great literature alone can a nation hope to live, now or hereafter. Were this great city to disappear to-morrow, like Carthage, its memory would perish with it."

"You cannot deny," said Cecilia, "that everybody is writing in America; indeed, we have no time to read half that merits reading."

"Oh, Cecilia, I know everybody writes, and tired enough I am of them. That is just the fault I find; there seems to be no high standard; people are too busy money-getting to care for the true—the artistic! If," she added, smiling in spite of herself, "if we only had in this country what Disraeli's Theodora held to be the chief elements of an ideal life, 'climate and the affections!'"

"The affections!" returned Cecilia, eagerly, "those, at least, none can deny us! They are warm, strong, enduring! no blinding flash, no ephemeral blaze, but a fire that burns on slowly and steadily, until death."

"No, and no flame either," said Mary, half under her breath. "I think your husbands would love you none the less, and see much less to admire in other women, if you only would not think it wrong to show your feelings. The other day, when you told Mrs. Brandon that you knew nothing of the passions, I saw Henry turn away, and shrug his shoulders."

"Henry," said Cecilia, reddening, "agrees with me in everything. I hope, Mary, you will not say such things before him; he would misunderstand you, and might misjudge you."

Mary turned away to hide her face, for it wore an expression at that moment she would not have her sister see. "Oh, there is Mr. Leroy!" she said.

"I am glad to see you," said Cecilia, rising, and then she added, laughing to veil her real feelings, "I feel anxious about my husband; have you seen him anywhere? We fear he is lost, in fact, we think of advertising for him, and setting the police on his track. He never dines out without letting me know where he is going, and now it is nine o'clock."

"Oh, these husbands," said Mr. Leroy, who was a genial old gentleman, and unaware of the pain he was inflicting, "there is no counting on them! You see there are too many attractions, madam, now-a-days. It is not as it used to be—not as it used to be! Young men are flighty—led away by the first new-comer." He made a cheerful hem, and looked smilingly around, as if he ought to be congratulated on his apt remarks, but Cecilia drew herself up, and thinking him an old fool, said, nervously:

"Henry is not so, I assure you, Mr. Leroy; he is not led away by any one."

"That may be, madam, that may be! there is attractive metal enough at home, I dare say! I should be of the same opinion myself in his place," and the old gentleman again laughed cheerfully; "but there are many rocks on which reckless youth may dash. I am old, and have some experience, my dear young lady!"

"How I hate him!" thought Cecilia, her color deepening.

"How do you do this evening?" said Mrs Brandon, radiant in green satin, as she sailed into the room. "I

was detained until an unusual hour, but it was this appalling news kept me at home."

"What news?" said Cecilia, her heart bounding.

"Is it possible you have not heard of Mr. Lowe's death?"

"Dead!" said Cecilia, "how sad! And he leaves his widow so young! Poor thing, how terrible!"

"Oh, my dear," said Mrs. Brandon, "that is not it. The woeful part is that he leaves her scarcely a roof over her head; she, the bright star in our horizon, will be forced to part with her jewels, and to live, they tell me, a life of squalid penury. I always had such tender sympathy for her. She was worthy, my dear Mrs. Elliot, to be one of our charmed circle!"

Mary looked toward Cecilia to see how she took this confirmation of her words uttered just before the entrance of their guest; but Cecilia did not return her glance.

"They do say," said a lady in crimson silk, lowering her voice, which was still quite audible, and drawing herself up with self-gratulatory dignity, "that he led a very bad life; they do say that he squandered his fortune on an actress. Is not that awful?"

"Oh yes, to be sure," said another lady. "Poor dear!" and she dashed away a furtive tear that moistened her spectacles.

"He was a disagreeable man at home, cross and selfish; and I dare say she was glad enough to be rid of him!" chimed in another of the sex.

"*'The evil that men do lives after them,'*" muttered a gentleman, as he moved away, shrugging his shoulders with some disgust.

"Have you seen the latest attraction, Mrs. Elliot?"

asked a Mr. Langley; "this young equestrienne, who is taking the town by storm? I heard lately that Mr. Sands made her an offer—"

"Of marriage?" interrupted Cecilia.

"No," he replied, smiling; "my chronieler does not go so far as that! I was going to add, of the finest pair in his stables; but she refused them. Have you seen the Signorina Rosa? By the way, I met Elliot this afternoon, coming up from his business, with Livingstone and Phillips."

"Did you?" said Cecilia, eagerly, "where were they going?"

"I never ask indiscreet questions," said Mr. Langley.

"There would have been nothing indiscreet in that," returned Cecilia.

"No, perhaps not; but Phillips is generally engaged in some affair which is best kept a little in the background; pardon me my indiscretion, Mrs. Elliot. Last year, you remember, his devotion to Mrs. Lecourt gave rise to a great deal of scandal."


"No," said Cecilia, "I never heard of her; why should it do so? She was a widow, I presume!"

"Not precisely a widow," said Mr. Langley, again smiling, "but widowed of her husband's legal affections. How lovely that young lady is—there, in the dove-colored dress!—dove-color, is it, or green? I have not a very good eye! Will you do me the honor to present me?"

"She probably will not find the defect in your eye so great as you pretend! If you will give me your arm I will introduce you to her with pleasure."

Cecilia glanced anxiously at the door; it was already half-after ten.

CHAPTER IV.

N an elegantly furnished suite of rooms, over Delmonico's, sat a young girl and three gentlemen.

"How pretty this is!" said the girl. "You do not mind, Mr. Phillips, my looking at everything?"

"Nothing could give me greater pleasure than to know you were looking at and admiring anything I possessed."

Rosa laughed. "Then I will examine all these *objects de vertu*! How much taste you have!—ah, one sees you have lived in Europe! How exquisite this is!" she exclaimed, her eyes lighting with pleasure, as she took up a small *Venus de Medici* in alabaster. "How sweet her little ear is,—just fit for tales of love!"

She ran on like a child prattling to herself.

"I used to see her at Florence. Have you all been there?" she asked, turning to the others. "I don't understand how you can live in America after Italy."

"Why, you are living here, too!" said Phillips.

"Yes, I am forced to stay here for a time, but it will not be long."

"You were born in Italy, were you not?" said Livingstone.

"Yes, I come from the Island of Sardinia, which accounts, they say, for my fiery temper," she answered,

gayly; "but I think"—she flashed slightly—"that it is not that. I believe it is the life I lead; it is such a trying one!"

"You do not like it, then?" asked Livingstone.

"I hate it; I detest it." And she turned away her head to hide the emotions of her face.

"But you are admired by everybody; you are the cynosure of the whole city. Every woman likes to be the queen of the kingdom she inhabits."

"Not in the way I am," said Rosa.

"May I have the pleasure of taking you in to dinner?" said Phillips, offering his arm.

"Here, Livingstone, place yourself on the other side of Miss Rosa—pardon me, I have not the honor of knowing your last name."

"Oh, it is no matter; everybody calls me Miss Rosa, but my name is Thornton."

"An English name!" said Livingstone; but Phillips gave him a look. Then turning to Rosa, continued, "Everybody, you mean, save the interesting clown in your establishment. If I am not mistaken, he solaced himself by giving you the title of Miss Rosy."

"Yes," said Rosa, and she broke into gay, child-like laughter, but checked it abruptly as Phillips had heard her do on the previous morning.

"He is a good man, for all that," she continued; "a true, honest fellow, who cares more for doing his duty, though in a humble way, than for anything else in life. He has a poor mother, whom he supports," she added, her color rising as she warmed with her theme. "I wish he had some other business; he does not like his own. He has to jest, whether he feels sad or merry. All

of you," she said, turning to them, "make sport of his miserable jokes, but you do not know how hard it is to be even stupidly funny every day of the year, and all the years of one's life."

"The person you speak of is very happy in possessing so warm an advocate," said Mr. Elliot, looking at Rosa with admiration. "There is not one of us that would not willingly change places with him."

"Indeed he is not happy at all!" said Rosa, earnestly, not noticing the latter part of Elliot's speech.

"Snubbed, Elliot!" whispered Phillips.

"I wonder," said Livingstone, who had heard from Phillips the story of the poor clown, if we could not find him some more agreeable occupation."

"Oh, pray do!" said Rosa, dropping her knife and fork, and clasping her hands together, "indeed he deserves it; I should be so glad for him, and for his mother."

"Well!" said Livingstone, "I need a man in my office to run errands, and if he will come to me, I will willingly give him ten dollars a week."

"Oh," said Rosa, her face radiant, "you are very good! that will be a small fortune to him. Mr. Cinizelli gives him only five dollars. I wish I could run at once and tell him! Poor fellow, he would repeat his jests with a lighter heart if he knew it. I believe he has to lie awake at night to invent new jokes, and after all they are so poor, I often blush for them."

"That was not such a bad one last night," said Phillips, "when he said he had gone into the army during our wars, and risen from the ranks with such rapidity that he reached, in a few days, the grade of General Nuisance. I thought the fellow made a hit then."

"Who was the pretty lady with you the other night—the first evening I saw you?" asked Rosa of Mr. Elliot.

"*'That was the glass of fashion, the observed of all observers,'*" he answered. "She has various titles; some people call her Sappho. Why, I do not know: she has never written, sung or suffered, that I know of! I have heard her called Zenobia; but her husband has given her the title of—Mrs. Brandon. Pardon me if I disagree with you in thinking her pretty."

"No, I do not mean her—not that showy lady, who spread out her dress as if she were a peacock," said Rosa, laughing. "I do not like her style; but that modest one, younger than she, who blushed continually?"

"By Jove! you have a quick eye," said Mr. Phillips, "Elliot is better informed about her than the rest of us—eh, Elliot?"

"Let us drink to Mrs. Brandon!" said Elliot, taking no notice of Phillips' last words. They filled their glasses.

"And long may she wave!" said Phillips, who was slightly affected by the various wines of which he had partaken.

"Fill up Miss Rosa's glass, Livingstone, and let us all drink to the prettiest creature we have seen for a long time—Miss Rosa Thornton!"

"I do not wish any more," said Rosa, gravely. "I do not like wine."

"*Sine Baccho friget Venus,*" said Phillips.

"It is rather warm here," said Livingstone; "suppose we take our coffee, if you have no objection, Phillips, in the next room."

They rose, and sauntered into the parlor. Rosa ap-

proached the table and began turning over the books. When she was silent, her face was dark ; her complexion was clear, but her hair, eyes and eyebrows so black as to give a dusky look to her features—save when she spoke ; then it suddenly brightened ;—into her eyes, which were languid and shaded with long eyelashes, came a quick radiance, and gave her face a brilliant air, which did not seem a part of it when she was not much interested.

Livingstone fancied, in the early part of the evening, while he watched her eyelashes drooping on her cheeks and the dark lines under her eyes, that many salt tears must have fallen already in the young girl's life. "Poor child!" he had said to himself; but with pity came a twinge of pain, and he had turned away, if possible, not to think of it again.

"Oh!" said Rosa, her face lighting now with that peculiar brilliancy, "here is Alfred de Musset! he, too, is an old friend of mine! I find in these rooms everything that I most care for!"

"Have you read him much?" asked Livingstone, with some surprise.

"Yes, nearly all he ever wrote, I believe. I devour all the books I can find; a great many, she said, coloring, "that I dare say I ought not to read,—but it is the only means I have of forgetting myself. But Alfred de Musset is not bad; to be sure, I do not like his poetry—except some fugitive pieces. Do you recall those lines ending with, 'Le seul bien qui me reste au monde est d'avoir pleuré quelquefois?' That is, indeed, the one good thing," she continued earnestly, as if forgetting herself a moment, "that is left to many of us."

"You are very young to say that," said Mr. Elliot, smiling, "you should remember those other words so much prettier and better suited to you, 'Fuit on l'amour quand on est si jolie?'"

"Do you not like De Musset?" said Rosa, not heeding Mr. Elliot; "he was unhappy! I always pity him."

"It is true," said Livingstone, "that he had an artistic temperament, which always tends, they say, to create unhappiness. I suppose it is to the possessor what delicate lungs are to a consumptive, and makes every breeze a blast. Yes, one feels an artist's hand in everything he wrote. The French have a national gift of expression; there is a clearness of perception, a power of graphic description, a keen introspection, that sounds at once the depths and shallows of the soul—a microscopic analysis of the human heart which is truly remarkable. And yet, when you close your book, there is no mental exhilaration; your intellect may have been sharpened, but it has not soared to nobler heights; you do not feel that your mind has been fed and fertilized, but only rendered more subtle and clear. Sight is not restored to the blind, but the eyes are opened to what were best unseen."

"I do not know," said Rosa, "that I ever thought of all that, but I have often felt a most depressing influence from reading French books; you find nothing as you say, that helps you to climb the mountains; you are only told that they are soft and slippery, clothed with poisonous flowers, and that you must needs climb them the best way you can! If you reach the summit, it is well; if you stumble and roll to the bottom, it is but natural and what others do."

"It seems to me," said Mr. Livingstone, "that you have most skillfully seized the key, and penetrated into the heart of the whole edifice." Rosa's face glowed with earnestness. Phillips and Elliot had gone into the next room to get cigars, and she was alone with Livingstone. He bent his eyes upon her with a feeling of wonder; he was studying her curiously; he could not understand how a girl in her position—a little circus rider—should be talking with him of French literature, whose spirit she had felt and comprehended.

"How old are you?—if it is not indiscreet to ask; at your fresh age, one does not mind," he said, smiling, "counting the circles on one's rind."

"I am seventeen, but I have been left so much to myself that reading has become my chief solace. I learned what I know of the languages by accident rather than otherwise. Italian is my native tongue; French I acquired, I know not how, long before I went to Paris; English I learned in England, in which country I stayed eight years in childhood. It was there I took my riding lessons—but I am talking a great deal about myself."

"Surely nothing could interest me more. Tell me," he said, "may I speak to you quite openly? May I take the liberty of a friend?"

"It is what I most need," said Rosa, looking down.

"Then I would say to you that this is not the place for you to visit. I have derived a selfish pleasure from meeting you here, but indeed you should not accept invitations from young men."

She raised her eyes and gave him a quick, searching look.

"No," said he; "not even if I were to ask you myself."

"Then what am I to do?" said she, her lips trembling. "Where am I to go? Ladies will not ask me to visit them, and I am so lonely! You do not know what loneliness is, or you would not speak thus to me."

"Pardon me, I have but to look at you to feel what it is for you; still, at the risk even of hurting your feelings, I shall say again, you ought not to be here!"

"Why are you here, then?" she said, quickly.

"Men are naturally selfish," he replied, smiling; "and besides it is generally thought of little consequence where a man goes; but a woman must be always screened and hedged about from contact with the world, like a rosebud within the moss. Where did you meet with your favorite, De Musset?" he added, with an indifferent air, as Phillips and Elliot approached them.

"I will tell you! When I was in Paris with Monsieur Cinizelli, I lived in a miserable little pension, and there, within a small glass case in the dining-room, was a row of volumes, very shabbily bound and much soiled. It was a strange assortment! The mistress of the house told me that her husband had been fond of reading, but he was dead, and that she had not sold these books, because they seemed to her a part of him. There I found Sismondi's Republics, George Sand's novels, several of Alexandre Dumas' and Fils', six volumes of Dickens, translated into French, and Alfred de Musset; that, I think, was all! I had always had a passion for reading, but scarcely any means of gratifying it, so I asked the landlady's leave to take some of these books to my room, and she reluctantly consented. It was a perfect banquet

to me, and I used to spend all my leisure hours in reading."

"And may one inquire what you did in those hours that were not leisure?" asked Mr. Phillips.

"Oh yes, I made all my dresses for the evenings—not my habits, those have to be cut by a tailor—so I often had to read at night."

"But your dresses are so light and airy," said Mr. Phillips, "that I should not have thought it would have required much time to make them."

"Ah," she said, smiling, "you forget that I must have so many. I do not care for rich dresses, but they must at least be perfectly fresh, and being of thin material, I can only wear them a few times. You are laughing at me, but it was you who led me on to give all these silly details."

"If Elliot or Livingstone are laughing, I will forthwith challenge them both. As for myself, I was never more serious in my life. One would not imagine that dainty finger ever wore thimble."

"But the little slave is crowned," said Rosa, laughing; "yes, I have a gold thimble, set round with turquoise, and my initials on it in the same stone. Is it not a pretty idea? It was sent me one night in London, screwed down on the handle of a beautiful whip; I never had anything that pleased me more."

Livingstone glanced at his watch. Rosa saw him, and looked at hers.

"It is late," she said; "I must go."

"No, don't be in a hurry," said Mr. Phillips, laughing; "let us make a merry night of it!"

"I have an engagement," said Livingstone, gravely;

"I do not know whether the other gentlemen have the same."

"By the way," said Elliot, taking out his watch, "I think we must be bound on the same road; we might all accompany Miss Thornton home, and then go together to my house."

Rosa hastened to put on her hat and mantle, and then said, "I am ready!"

"This is my right *par excellence*," said Mr. Phillips, offering his arm to Rosa.

"We accord it you," said Mr. Elliot, "so long as it is not *par préférence*."

"Have you given my offer of yesterday a second thought?" said Phillips to Rosa, as they got into the street; "is your decision still irrevocable with regard to Bruno?"

He felt her hand tremble on his arm, but he resisted the temptation he experienced to press it to his side; he did not wish to frighten her.

"I have thought of it all the time since you made it, but oh, Mr. Phillips!—why did you ever put it in my mind? Why did you ever place it in my power to think of a subject so painful to me?"

"My dear girl, forget it at once! I never would have mentioned it had I imagined it would give you a moment's pain."

"Yes, but there are reasons why I cannot forget it, reasons of which I cannot speak, that have placed the keeping of Bruno under the form of a terrible temptation to me."

"Some maiden's whim, some female vanity, some woman's caprice, eh?"

"Oh no! not that! No, indeed, not that! What a beautiful night it is!"

"Yes, we shall have splendid nights at sea next month, —a full moon all the way over!"

"How I envy you!" she said. "I love life on the ocean; it is a drifting between two unknown shores—neither life nor death. There seem to be no duties imposed on one; one has nothing to do save look into the bosom of the waters, and try to see all the wonders that are there. I always imagined when I leaned over the bulwark at night that I saw the sea-nymphs beckoning to me, and holding up necklaces of pearls to lure me. I thought they knew I belonged to nobody, and that they would have me with them."

"Would you like to be on your way back to Europe so soon?"

"Oh yes, above all things! I have been here a long time, but I cannot get accustomed to the country; and yet, strangely enough, I have a feeling that I am to live here always, and the thought makes me very sad."

"I don't wonder. I can endure it for a few months, but no longer; when one has once tasted life abroad, one does not willingly come back to the frightful realities of America. I was amused the other day by a French girl's definition of this country,—'Why, sir,' she said, 'one amuses one's self at Paris with four cents; one does not amuse one's self here with four dollars.' I thought it was packing the whole in a few words."

Rosa laughed. "It is very true," she said, "although I have never learned the secret of the word '*s'amuser*.' Yet there is an *entrainement* in Paris, a variety in the shops, a rush, a bustle, an excitement about nothing, a

perpetual movement without any special motive, that interests one, and carries one out of one's self, in spite of all one's determination to be sad."

"Take care," said Elliot, "we are very near you, we overhear everything."

"No," said Livingstone, "Elliot maligns us;—we have heard nothing except Miss Thornton's last sentence, which struck us both as very true. I think it is Madame de Stael who says, 'It is at Paris that one can best do without happiness.'"

"One might modernize the *mot*," said Phillips, "and improve it by saying, at New York one must do without happiness. Here we are at your door, Miss Rosa! Good evening, and au revoir, is it not?"

"Good-night, and thanks for the very pleasant evening I have passed." She bowed to them with dignity, and entered her humble home.

"Hang it!" said Phillips, as they turned away, "one does not know how to talk to the girl; you find yourself treating her with all the respect you would show to a real lady, and yet you feel half-ashamed of your own *gaucherie*, when you remember that she is only a circus-rider."

"I should think one need not feel ashamed of treating her with all the respect she commands," said Mr. Livingstone.

"She has the prettiest, most passionate face I ever saw," said Elliot, carelessly, striking a match.

"It would not be a bad idea to make her one's traveling companion," said Phillips. "It would need a deuced plucky fellow to do it—all your spare hours would be employed in fencing lessons—dueling is rather a profession on the continent, you know!"

"You might prepare for one here first!" said Livingstone. Mr Phillips did not see by the evening light how his face darkened as he spoke.

"You take everything *au grand sérieux*," he answered, laughing; "you are a sort of man-Mélpomene, Livingstone! You and Miss Thornton would make a great hit if you appeared together on the stage; wouldn't they, Elliot?"

Mr. Elliot did not reply, and they walked on in silence.

CHAPTER V.



R. ELLIOT and his two friends, as they passed through the door of his house, heard a hum of voices, and saw that the drawing-rooms were already filled. Cecilia's face lighted as she saw them enter; she was seated with her back to the door, trying to seem absorbed in the conversation of a gentleman, but her eyes were fixed upon a mirror opposite, or wandered restlessly toward the clock; her lips were growing parched, and the color burning in two bright spots upon her cheeks.

"Pardon me!" she said, as she hurried across the room to welcome her guests.

"Oh Henry!" she said, in a low voice, "how could you stay so late? I have been so anxious, so nervous."

"About what?" said Henry.

"About you, darling! Where were you all this time?"

"I will tell you later," he said, rather avoiding her eye.

"But why not now? I was so sorry I was out when you came home—did you dress then? How handsome you look, Henry!" she said, glancing up admiringly at her husband. "Go and entertain some of my guests! It has seemed so dull this evening; a woman cannot be brilliant when her husband is away; go and make some life!" So saying, she turned away, relieved because he had come, yet only half happy, and why, she knew not

herself. Mr. Phillips was already deep in conversation with Miss Alcott, and Mr. Livingstone had approached Miss Mary Marlboro.

"You are late, Mr. Livingstone!" said Mary, coldly, and pulling rather nervously the leaves of a tea-rose which fastened the lace at her pretty throat; "whenever you are with Mr. Phillips you are always late!"

"Spare that rose, in your anger against Phillips!" said Livingstone, laughing; "he is not worth the shedding so much fragrance!"

"No!" replied Mary, quickly, "nor is any man!"

"You are scathing, Miss Marlboro!"

"Am I? Was Henry with you this evening?"

"Yes, we dined together at Delmonico's!"

"He might have brought you home with him," she said, coloring; "it would have been more hospitable."

"He could not; it was Phillips that gave the dinner."

"Were there any ladies present?"

"There was one lady," said Livingstone, smiling.

"I do not believe she was a lady," said Mary, contemptuously; "an old lady Mr. Phillips would not ask, for he has no respect for age, and no young lady would be so bold as to dine at Delmonico's alone with three gentlemen. Although I know your American habits go pretty far, yet there is some propriety left, I believe, even in New York."

"You are always hard on your own country, Miss Marlboro!"

"Perhaps because I love it so much. I hate the affected sentiment with which you all speak of it; hiding its faults, so that they find no remedy! But who was this fair lady, if I may ask?"

"You may ask, and I will reply—that she was not fair, but dark, as truly Italian as even you could desire, with no American taint or tinge upon her, and yet a lady to the manor born, with a face as sweet, young and innocent as I ever saw—and full of feeling; in whose eyes one sees storm and sunshine succeed one another more swiftly than in April weather; a face one could remember forever with blended pleasure and pain, and where one can read prophetically that 'the greater is yet behind.'"

"Really, I never heard Mr. Livingstone so eloquent before; who is this lady whom all women must envy?"

"Miss Thornton!"

"I never heard of her; is she a new star?"

"Pardon me, you have both heard of and seen her!" said Mr. Livingstone.

"Miss Thornton—I do not remember any such person; and yet such a picture must have left some impression on the mind. Pray who is she, Mr. Livingstone? I am burning with curiosity!"

"Do you recall an evening, not so long ago, spent at the circus—a plebeian entertainment enough, still it gave us some pleasure at the time. The famous equestrienne of the troupe was the Miss Thornton of whom I speak."

"You jest!"

"Why do I jest, Miss Marlboro?"

"Because you called her a lady!"

"And has not the person who afforded us so much pleasure a soul, like ourselves? Does she not belong to the great order of humanity? Is there any reason why she should not become one of us—provided she be good, I mean as we are?"

"It is your turn to be scathing now, Mr. Livingstone!"

"Whom are you talking of?" asked Cecilia, joining them.

"Oh," said Mary, haughtily, and laying great stress on her words, "we were speaking of a particular friend of Mr. Livingstone!"

"I can scarcely boast so much," said Livingstone, laughing; "we were discussing the Amazon of the day—Miss Rosa Thornton, and Miss Marlboro does me the honor to approve my good taste in admiring that lady."

"I am sure," said Cecilia, "I do not wonder at it. She is the prettiest creature I ever saw! No, perhaps not the prettiest, that is not the word, but the most interesting;—she has the dearest face, so full of fire—she looks so earnest—so intense."

"But I do not admire Mr. Livingstone's discrimination in calling her a lady," said Mary.

"But, pray, what should I call her?"

"A girl!"

"You are right; perhaps she is hardly old enough to be called anything else."

"No, I do not mean *that*," said Mary, "you understand my meaning perfectly well—a person in her position cannot be called a lady."

"But if she is one?"

"She cannot be!"

"But if in character and manners she is one, why may she not be called so?"

"Because a circus-rider cannot be a lady."

"If she really cannot be," said Mr. Livingstone, bowing and laughing, "then the discussion ends there. I go to discover my genealogical tree. Aristocracy and America

have this in common, that they both begin with the first letter of the alphabet."

As he moved away, Mary's face grew scarlet; she turned from her sister with an impatient shrug of her shoulders, and said no more. Supper was soon announced, and Livingstone came back to offer Miss Marlboro his arm, but she slipped hers into that of another gentleman, who had forestalled Mr. Livingstone, and feigning not to see the latter, passed into the supper-room. Soon after supper the guests dispersed.

"Good-night!" said Mary to Cecilia; "I am tired, and am going to my room."

"Good-night!" said Cecilia; "it has been a very dull party. Put out the lights, John! Come, Henry, let us go up stairs, I am very tired!"

Cecilia went to her room, and unclasped abstractedly her necklace from her neck. There was a feeling of heaviness about her heart. She wanted to speak naturally to Henry, but she felt as if she could not—she knew not why. She heard him moving in the next room.

"Henry," she asked, "where were you this evening?"

"I was at Delmonico's," he answered cheerily.

"Was any one with you, dear?"

"Yes, Phillips and Livingstone." There was a pause.

"Any one else?"

There was silence in the next room—she raised her voice, and repeated—

"Any one else, Henry?"

"No!" he answered. It hurt him to say it, but somehow he did not like to tell her who was there; his "No!" felt cold on the air which lay between them, and there was silence again. Cecilia said—

"I do not think it right, Henry, not to let me know when you are dining out. It is very unkind to keep me in agitation and anxiety all the evening. You know I am nervous and worried if I am uncertain where you are."

"It is foolish to be thus worried and anxious; I am not a child, and the sooner you get over this nonsense the better. I am putting you through a course of training."

"You are cruel," said Cecilia, with a tremulous voice. "Good-night, dear Henry!"

No answer!

She threw herself on her bed, and smothering her face in the pillows, cried herself to sleep.

And where was Rosa Thornton during all these hours? She was seated in her lonely room, on the side of her bed, recalling the events of the evening. Had she been happy? she asked herself. Did she ever have a happy hour? Why was not she, like other girls, hedged about by a happy home—by troops of friends—by sisters and brothers? Had she been right in going alone to Mr. Phillips' rooms? Something instinctive told her that she had not. The blood rushed to her brow as she thought, how could they think well of her? Why did they not ask some ladies to meet her? But any lady would blush to be seen in the same parlor with her, and why had God made it so? She had done no harm, and yet everybody shrunk from her!

"They will drive me mad," she said, thrusting her hands through her thick, dark hair, and tangling her

locks, while the hot tears fell upon them and glistened there like diamonds. "They will drive me mad! I shall cry away all my good looks before I am twenty, and then no one will even glance at me again. They would not think me pretty now, if they could see me in the day, with these great black marks under my eyes; my mother used to say to me, 'Rosa, all thou hast is thy beauty; when that is gone, no one will love thee!' Oh, what a wicked world it is! I want to be happy—I want to be happy—yet everything mocks me; the earth, with its bright flowers, the sun with his light, even the horrid music to which nightly I must needs keep time! My mother is very wicked, very cruel, and so is my father, or they would not have sent me into the cold world to battle with its temptations. I hate them both, but I defy them all—all!" said she, starting up and pacing rapidly up and down the room, while her eyes flashed.

"Nobody knows my secret—nobody shall have it; it is my own; but I feel the fire here," pressing her hand upon her heart, "and it shall not burn in vain; they shall yet applaud me, and in earnest!—no sneers!—no *double entendres*! They shall kneel at my feet and ask my pardon for the wrong they have done me." Suddenly she stopped and murmured, while her face grew pale:

"I must part with Bruno! I will accept Mr. Phillips' kind offer; I hate to take money from him, but it is the speediest way! Five thousand dollars—that is twenty-five thousand francs!—a dowry such as few girls in Italy are fortunate enough to have. Let me see, I will give ten thousand to my mother; there will be left fifteen thousand, which must last me two years while I am studying; and then I will *do* something—oh, I know I

can do something! Dear, dear Bruno! perhaps I can buy you back one day! Others humbler than I, and poorer, too, have done more than that;" she paused suddenly—her heart throbbed fast:

"What was that noise? Oh, how wholly alone I am." She looked around anxiously; the lamp shed a dim light through the room; she stooped nervously, looked under her cot, there was nothing there; she glanced upward, the little mirror on the wall reflected only her own dark form; she could hear her heart beating—'twas the sole sound within the chamber; she hurried to the door, and turning the key,

"Who is there?" she asked, tremulously. There was no answer—only a stifled sound.

"Who is there?" she repeated.

"Nobody, Signorina! I only came up to watch that nobody came near this door!"

"Go away instantly," cried Rosa, "or I will call the police!"

"Good-night, Miss Rosa!"

"Good-night," she returned, more kindly. She heard him shuffle down the stairs. She opened the window, and leaned out. Looking down, she saw George, the poor clown, trudging dolefully away; her heart ached for him.

"Poor fellow," she thought, "I wish I could say something to comfort him—but I cannot!" At this moment her eyes fell on the opposite side of the street; she drew back her head quickly, while the blood rushed to her cheeks, flooding her neck and brow.

"Who was it?" whispered she to herself. "Surely I have seen that man before."

CHAPTER VI.



THE next morning Cecilia and Mary were seated in the drawing-room—it was after breakfast, and Henry had gone down town. Cecilia and he had not made up their little quarrel, and the former was restlessly turning over the books that lay on the table, while Mary was apparently absorbed in reading. On a sudden, looking up—

“Cecilia,” said she, “I am going to call on that little circus-rider to-day; would you like to come with me?”

“You are mad!” said Cecilia. “You *would* not do such a foolish thing?”

“Why not? What is the difference between her and any other girl, save that she is much prettier and looks more spirited?”

“Are you in jest, Mary, or is this one of your independent freaks?”

“Why, no! I do, indeed, mean to go. I see no reason why she should not be visited by us, as well as by our friends.”

“But our friends do not visit her.”

“Gentlemen do!”

“She must be a very bad girl,” said Cecilia, warmly, “if gentlemen visit her—and I do not believe they do. It is very different here, Mary, and in Europe—thank heaven that it is so!”

"I see no reason in the world," said Mary, who would have argued just as willingly on the other side, "why she must be a bad girl because gentlemen visit her. You do not say that of Miss Alcott or Miss Bates."

"The case is very different, and you know it," said Cecilia. "Besides, as I said before, I do not believe that any real gentlemen do visit her."

"Do you think Mr. Livingstone a real gentleman? He does!"

"I do not believe it!"

"You will never think ill of any one," Mary returned. "You are always fancying an ideal Round-Table where Henry presides in person, like King Arthur; I am so tired of his perfections and those of Mr. Livingstone, his Lancelot. Take care of your heart, my dear!"

"I will!" said Cecilia, with burning cheeks.

"Mr. Livingstone," continued Mary, glad to give a proof of his defection, which might make Cecilia unhappy and herself irritated against him—"Mr. Livingstone dined with her yesterday! What do you think of that, for American morals?"

"You are mistaken," said Cecilia, quietly, "for Mr. Livingstone dined yesterday with Mr. Phillips and Henry, at Delmonico's!"

"Henry also dined with Miss Thornton—as Mr. Livingstone calls her"—said Mary, her impatience at Cecilia's pertinacity leading her to say what she had meant to keep from her sister.

"What do you mean?" broke in Cecilia, who had grown deadly pale. At this moment Mary looked up, and beheld so much agony in her sister's face, that she

felt genuine remorse for having given her such pain. She rose, and throwing her arms about Cecilia's neck,

"I do not believe," she cried, "dear sister, that Henry was there."

"He was! But I do not mind *that*, Mary!" she answered—struggling in vain to keep her voice steady—" 'tis his deceiving me! He told me that Mr. Livingstone and Mr. Phillips were there, and no one else! Why did he deceive me? I could not have so deceived him. Oh Mary," she cried, bursting into tears, "never marry! I don't think love worth the *price* we pay for it. We sit at home all our lives long, and wait! They always know whether they are coming home to us, and know they will always find us here, but *we* never know when their feet are turned our way; so that we, being always uncertain, and they ever secure, our love grows and theirs wanes. We live all day on a smile or a word, which they forget before they have turned the first corner. I think, Mary, I was happier before we were married. It seems traitorous to Henry to say it; but oh, sister dear, I must pour out all to you! My life is a great deal fuller now; yet I find myself ever questioning, have I charms enough to keep him always mine? Men are so restless, and Henry seems to love what is beautiful so much!"

"But you are beautiful enough for any one," said Mary, "and besides, he chose you!"

"If I am not prettily dressed, he seems to feel less proud of me," continued Cecilia. "If I were poor, and had to wear plain gowns, would he love me as well, I wonder? And yet it has always seemed to me it would be so sweet to be poor! I hate our wealth, Mary! it is

a great divider! I should love to toil all day, and feel tired and worn out at night—to think, when I bought a thing, that I had earned it—to deny myself little luxuries, that I might get Henry something; to set the table with my own hands, and watch Henry's face light up as he came in to our frugal meal. I feel, sometimes, when our table is set out so elegantly, without the least exertion on my part, as if I could not bear it!—and that dreadful man-servant, always standing behind me to take my orders. I have not yet known myself what *ennui* is, but already I fear it for Henry! It must all be dull to him!”

“You think of Henry too much,” said Mary; “it is the way to make him think less of you.”

“Sometimes I believe that it is so,” said Cecilia, despondingly; “the more pains I take to please him, the less I succeed. I wish, at times, that I had all the charms of Cleopatra! I know that is very wrong.”

“Why is it wrong?”

“Because then he could not respect me so much!”

“Cecilia, you will never be happy while you keep such foolish notions! Give way to your nature! Do not explore Henry's, but follow your own! Do not be jealous—men hate that most! It shows a want of confidence in yourself.”

“But, how can I help it? Oh Mary, teach me!—you know so much more than I! I wish I were an artist! I wish I had some object or aim in life. If I could paint as you can, I should not be so unhappy!”

“Yes, you would,” said Mary, smiling. “But promise me this, at least—never to *show* that you are jealous! Read, study—make yourself a companion to Henry in

all things! We women have so much leisure which we fritter away on the thousand trifles of life, achieving nothing! Sometimes I do not wonder that men are disgusted with us! Even their sordid gains are like a giant's work, compared to the petty, dwarf-like fruits of our hours! 'What have you done to-day?' a husband asks, when he comes home weary from his business;—and a wife can only answer—"I have shopped a little, written a letter, dressed, and made a few calls—and then come home to dress again for dinner;"—what a barren life!"

"It is, indeed," sighed Cecilia; "and the great road to eternity is trodden with just such aimless feet. Oh Mary! I wish I had been strong like you, and learned to love a career better than any man!"

"Perhaps," said Mary, reddening, and turning away her head, "I shall not always be so strong; only if I once win the love of a man, I mean to keep it. I will never let him know how much I love him! It is *that* makes men tyrants, and women slaves!"

"Oh I wish I were like you!" cried Cecilia, gazing at her sister with admiration, "I wish I were anything but what I am!"

"Wish to be yourself—since that you cannot change," said Mary, smiling—"only made stronger against Henry's fatal powers! I am going up stairs now to prepare for those odious things, named '*calls*'!"

"You are not going *there*?" asked Cecilia, quickly.

"No, not to-day!" returned Mary, glancing back mischievously; "perhaps some other time!"

"I wish," murmured Cecilia, as Mary closed the door, —her head sinking on the table, "that I had a child!

That, at least, would keep me from ever being wholly wretched. What is the use of anything without that? All day and all night I pray for it, yet that does not avail me! And I may not tell any one of this aching void that is ever present in my heart! How shall I meet Henry to-day? Shall I reproach him? Then he will be angry! But I cannot be silent! I must speak! I cannot keep this feeling in my heart, and smile! Has he known no remorse to-day? Oh, it was dreadful not to tell me! Why, there is nothing in the world I would conceal from him! I feel so lonely—not even Mary can take away this sense of loneliness! But I will try to be strong, and not cry my eyes red; for Mary says men hate tears, and she is right! Why do they make us cry, then?"

Cecilia took up a book, and tried to fix her attention on it; but ever and again the book dropped from her hands, and she fell to wondering why it was that Henry had concealed from her the fact of his meeting that little circus beauty at Mr. Phillips' rooms.

Presently Mary came down, and, looking in, asked if she would not walk with her; but no, she could not make up her mind to go out. What a long day stretched out before her, till the dinner-hour, when Henry would come home! And would he come to-day, or would he stay away again? She paced the room restlessly. She sat down once more to read. The servant tells her lunch is ready. She does not care for lunch. The hours drag slowly on.

Suddenly she started;—what was that? A key turning quickly in the street door! Cecilia's cheeks burned; her hands grew cold. A hasty step in the hall—her husband's—and then she heard him go up the stairs. She

longed to run after him, but something withheld her. She listened; he was walking in the room above, and whistling a familiar air. Was he so happy, then, and she so miserable? Presently she heard his step in his dressing-room; she still waited, uncertain what to do; now he was coming down the stairs,—was he going out again? It was yet early, he never came home so early before—her heart beat fast. Now his steps approach the drawing-room door. It is opened:

“Ah, Cecilia, my love! Is that you? I was looking for you up stairs.” She did not run to meet him and throw her arms about his neck—she stood quite still:

“Henry, dear,” said she, in a low voice, “will you not come in?”

“I am in a hurry, now,” he answered hastily.

“Yes, but Henry, dear, I entreat you to come in for a moment!”

“Why, what is the matter, Cecilia, are you not well?”

“Oh, yes, very well!” she said, in a tremulous tone; “where are you going so hurriedly? I feel so wretched, Henry dear, will you not take me to walk? All the day long the sunlight has been pouring into my room, but I have felt so lonely!”

“Well,” he said, kindly, “little girl, go and put on your bonnet, I will take you to walk; I am sorry you do not feel well!”

He had called her “little girl.” She loved to hear that, it sounded so gentle, and he never said it but when he felt very kindly toward her. She was afraid of Henry—afraid of displeasing him—and it was this very fear which repelled him. She moved to the door as if to go

and make ready for her walk, but as her hand touched the handle, she paused suddenly, and in a quick undertone:

"Henry!" she said, "you deceived me last night, you did not tell me there was another person with you at Delmonico's! There was some one else there! I would not have minded it, had you told me—'twas your not telling me that has caused me so much pain!"

She had turned round now, and was facing Henry; all the sweet sunshine had gone out of his face, and it looked fixed and hard; her hand trembled; she raised it, and put it on his shoulder; her voice faltered.

"Henry, dearest, do not be angry with me! Do speak, and tell me why you did not say who was there?"

"Because," he answered, coldly, "I know your absurd ideas about classes—that no Brahmin loves his caste as women do their pseudo-aristocracy. I knew the girl would stand no chance of escaping your scorn."

"Oh, Henry," she cried, bursting into tears, "how can you speak so? I am sure I love the poor; where have you ever seen me shrink from them?—or from serving them? But this girl, so common—so vulgar, so low—how could you dine with her?—how *could* you so demean yourself?"

"I told you," he said, "she would not escape your scorn; I now tell you that she is neither low nor vulgar, and that I have never seen a more refined, modest young girl."

"Oh, Henry!" said Cecilia, quickly, with a face where indignation, scorn and reproach were all blended.

"It is true!" he continued. "By heaven, you women

are all down on any one of your sex who lifts herself above the rest by winning an honest livelihood!"

"Honest, Henry?"

"Yes, honest! I wish most of you were as much so. Hedged about as you are, what do you know of the world and its temptations? What do you do to earn your living? What equivalent do you give for all you have received? Lapped in idle luxury, what do you know of the struggle for mere existence? I honor the hewers of wood and drawers of water more than those who know only how to put their lips to the fountain and drink!"

"But I do not call her life labor," said Cecilia, contemptuously.

"Yes, it is, genuine labor!—and fairly and squarely undergone! She gives what she can, works hard for her daily bread, and she deserves praise for it, and admiration!"

"Which you bestow on her freely," said Cecilia. "Would you like me to dance nightly on horseback before a crowd of common men?"

"No, I should not—because you were brought up to something better."

"Then you do grant *that* is not the highest vocation?"

"For her, I think it is!"

"You are unkind, cruel!" cried Cecilia; "you know you make me wretched; you love to torture me! That is precisely a man's notion of power, to tyrannize over a weak woman who loves foolishly—blindly—and—"

"Why are you weak? It is your own fault! Why do you love foolishly and blindly?"

"I did not say I was weak—I did not allude to myself in any way!"

“No, but your remark implied that you meant yourself!”

“I am tired of this war of words; you may go when you choose, Henry!”

“Will you go with me?”

“No!”

“Well, good-by, then!” He went toward the door. She longed to stop him, but a thousand passions were warring in her breast.

“Henry,” she said, “will you not come home to dinner?”

“I cannot tell—good-by!” and he closed the door. She wanted to run after him, and beg him, “Forgive me, Henry!” and say, “Kiss me before you go!” but while she hesitated, the outer door closed also—he was gone!

She threw herself down on the sofa, and wept like a child; then she sat quite still, and thought over all Henry had said. He had been hard, cruel, but was he not just, too? Had she not treated with scorn a person who did not merit it? Had she not in anger called her low and vulgar, when the superiority of her bearing had particularly impressed her! And that uncommon look the young girl had!—might she not, poor thing, be striving to gain her livelihood amid a thousand temptations? Was she not far superior to herself, who did nothing?

“’Tis *that* Henry dislikes in me—my idleness—my purposeless existence—but what can I do? I have been brought up to do nothing. I have no decided talents, as Mary has; mere reading is not enough; besides, reading is optional, it cannot always arrest and fix the attention. There is no use in reading, but to cultivate our

minds; and what is the use of culture, after all? What does it avail when we come to die? And then, I might read all my life, yet there is so much to know, I should still be ignorant! Oh, I wish I were this Rosa! I should be so much happier than I am! She bestows pleasure, and wins applause, to her heart's content! She attracts everybody, and what most seemed her misfortune, is, in fact, her happiness.

"I have betrayed every mean passion, while talking with Henry—jealousy, envy, anger, unkindness, uncharitableness. I will try and grow better, and prove myself more worthy of his love,—his love which I would have so entirely! I should not wonder if he hated me—I must rise above myself—but oh, it is all so hard!" Cecilia said, as she moved toward the stairs.

When she reached her room she glanced at the glass; the color came back to her cheek, for she saw a young and pretty face reflected there. She was smiling at her own folly, when there stole into her mind those words of the fairy tale—where the fairy queen asks of her mirror, "Who is the loveliest in all the land?"—"You, lady queen, are the fairest here! but the snowdrop is a thousand times fairer still!" Cecilia sighed as she thought that the mirror might well answer *her*, "But Rosa is a thousand times fairer still!" Did *he* think so? she pondered,—did Henry ever compare them in his mind? She shuddered to think the only person she had ever been jealous of was—a circus rider!

"How strange it is! Yet Henry was right here, too! for it does hurt my pride of blood, a certain prejudice *will* rise and whisper that I am her superior,—while before God, the best and supreme judge, it is not so!

He will weigh our souls, careless of our lineage! That I know—and yet the feelings of this earth, and its false estimates, are strong in me!”

Cecilia had hardly time to dress before she heard Henry's step in the hall once more. He had come to dinner, then,—he had a good heart! She ran out and called to him over the balusters. He only looked up and said he was tired, that he hoped dinner was ready. Cecilia rang the bell.

“John, serve dinner immediately! Mr. Elliot is in haste.” She went slowly down stairs.

“Where is Mary?” said Mr. Elliot, as they sat down by the table.

“I do not know,” Cecilia said, looking steadfastly into her plate; “she went out early, and has not come home since.”

“Why did you not go with her?”

“I did not feel like it.”

“You do not care for health, or for beauty! You throw away all the weapons God has given you, and yet you expect to win the battle!”

“Henry!” she began reproachfully, and tears rushed to her eyes—but John was just coming in, so she looked down again as if studying with intense interest the flowers traced upon the porcelain.

Henry had glanced at her, and seen her eyes yet swollen with the recent tears: he felt vexed and annoyed. The dinner proceeded in silence, a few brief questions meeting answers as brief—just enough, as they fancied, to throw dust in the servant's eyes, who perceived, however, the signs of sorrow on his young mistress's face, and sympathized with her in her troubles.

At length the dinner was over, and they rose to leave the room ; Henry lighted a cigar.

Cecilia looked at her husband. She felt that she had failed. All her good resolutions seemed frozen within her. Could she not warm them into life again ? Could she not conquer herself, and win back her husband's smile ? She resolved to make one more effort.

"Did you have a pleasant walk to-day, Henry ?" she said.

"Yes, rather pleasant," he replied, abstractedly.

"Was not the weather lovely ?"

"Yes, it is a beautiful day." He looked at his watch. Her heart throbbed. Would he leave her again alone ?

"Wouldn't you like to come with me to the circus to-night ? There is to be a new feat performed, and I think it will be worth seeing."

"Who is to perform this novel feat ?"

"Miss Thornton !"

"Why do you not call her the Signorina Rosa ?"

"Because I prefer her English name !"

"She does not make use of it herself."

"Pardon me, it is the name she bears !"

"Not on the bills."

"I cannot say, I never examined them."

"Whom are you going with ?" asked Cecilia, hoarsely.

"I do not know yet. Will *you* come ?"

"Thank you, no ! I do not care for it, I have seen her once ; it is the same thing over and over !"

"You look on her with prejudiced eyes ! Now, I have never seen her do anything twice in the same way ! There is a wonderful variety both in expression and movement !"

“It seems, indeed, that in your eyes, ‘*custom cannot stale her infinite variety!*’”

“Complete the quotation—the first half is quite as appropriate as the last, not yet certainly can ‘*age wither her,*’” said Henry, laughing good-naturedly.

At least he had laughed—Cecilia half relented; he could not be so deeply interested, if he could laugh—and Henry’s laugh was so pleasant! She looked up and for the moment caught his eye; alas, all the cheery brightness had vanished, there was nothing but coldness there! What was this wall which had risen so suddenly betwixt them? Her heart seemed to dash against it, but it was hard and chill, and on the one side was Henry, on the other herself! She longed to spring up, and fling her arms about his neck; but she dared not. Henry hated scenes. As Cecilia hesitated, Henry rose.

“Are you going?” she said reproachfully. “Mary is out, and it is so lonely for me.”

“I asked you to come with me.”

“Yes, but I do not wish to go *there*; only to witness your admiration of another.”

“Am I, because I am married, to be always tied to one woman’s side?”

“You took a vow, when you married me, and it was this, leaving all others to cleave only unto me; you seem to have forgotten that!”

“Those words are but empty forms which have to be undergone. They mean nothing!”

“Henry!”

“Nothing at all!”

“And ‘for better, for worse, in sickness, and in health,’ means nothing, then?”

"Well, no; they do not mean much! Nobody—who is sick—ought to keep another bound to him; and if wedlock turn out for the worse, instead of the better, why, in that case, I think the *best* would be to separate at once!"

"Then you openly confess that you believe in no divine laws?"

"I believe in the divine law of freedom."

"And of marriage?"

"Marriage is no divine law! It is a contract instituted by man, for the good of society; its single aim is to benefit the children that may be born of it; where there are no children, marriage becomes a contract without a purpose, a useless bond; from the moment, that is, the parties concerned so hold it."

"Henry, you are breaking down all that is high and holy; you are defiling the most sacred laws; you know that, though spoken by man, they were inspired by God himself! I am sure you do not mean what you say; you are only bent on torturing me, and you do, indeed torture me! I am tired of these mystical metaphysics; tired of profane thoughts; tired of everything!"

"If I am my own iconoclast, I have no one but myself to blame," said Henry, coldly.

"Yes," cried Cecilia, "I hate your scientific skepticism. It is worse than the lowest superstition. A Juggernaut is better than no God."

"A mirage, then, that leads you from your track, is better than honest thirst. I know your woman's doctrine well," said Henry, "that a belief in a lie is holier than a belief in nothing. You prize your stuffed lap-dog more than our modern analysis which has civilized the world. For my part, I hold the humblest truth worth all your

religions and moralities! Good evening!" and taking up his hat, he left the room.

Cecilia sat staring blankly before her; where was he, her Henry? Had he really left her thus? Starting up, she paced the floor; then let her face fall upon her hands, and burst into passionate sobs.

The door opened; it was Mary.

"Why, Cecilia, what is the matter?"

"Oh, Mary, come and comfort me! I am so miserable!"

"What has happened?"

"Oh, Mary, where were you all the day? Had you been here at dinner it would not have been so dreadful. Henry has been so cruel, and he has gone again to see her!"

"To see whom?"

"Her!—you know!—that bad girl—that circus-girl!"

Mary smiled, she could not help it, as the vision of poor Rosa's delicate distinguished face rose before her, so little in keeping truly with her profession, and so unlike Cecilia's description.

"What bad girl do you mean?"

"Oh, you are all leagued against me! Now you are going to take Henry's part; you know perfectly well whom I mean—that Rosa! Mary, he has gone again to see her at the circus!"

"Did he not ask you to go?"

"Yes, but I did not wish to!"

"Tien the fault is yours! Now, Cecilia, I am going to scold you. You are ungrateful!—you are quarreling with yourself!—and, in the first place, you have been putting out your own stars—you have been crying all day!"

“How do you know that?”

“By that faculty which teaches me to distinguish colors, my dear! Why your eyes are red as they can be! You know men hate tears—that they have no patience with them.”

“They are the creators of them, why should they not bear with them? Does a mother hate her own children?”

“You cannot reason in that way, Cecilia! It is just what Henry would love to call illogical; men, you know, are not women!”

“Indeed they are not!” cried Cecilia; “they are not half so good, so generous, so forbearing!”

“No, they are not,” said Mary, “and there, as Henry says, you strike a truth. But as I said before, men hate tears.”

“They are unjust, cruel tyrants,” broke in Cecilia.

“I think men often are tyrannical,” continued Mary; “but theoretically, at least, they are often just. They have larger outlooks than we, and they see more clearly; while we flourish our parlor brushes, they sweep with brooms; more dust may fly beneath their hands than ours, but there is a cleaner, wider space left, when all’s done.”

“But why, Mary, should they hate tears after marriage; when before it, they are touched by them, and kiss them away?”

“Why, Cecilia, you ought to answer all those questions yourself, not ask me; you are married—I am single!”

“Yes, Mary, but you know so much more than I!”

“Well, then, the reason I think is this: women are born for sentiment and love; these are their elements, their normal state. Not so with men. They begin life

with a drum, women with a doll; one makes a noise with his plaything, the other lulls and fondles hers, and so it goes on. Boys learn to swim, ride, row, while girls lisp poetry, nestled at their mothers' feet. Our brothers, even in childhood, are wrestling with the world; we stand apart and gaze in wonder at them; we study at home for the most part, while they go forth to college, to compete with one another for its prizes. And then comes real work; hitherto they have been training, but at length they feel themselves started in the great race of manhood for the great goal, success. It is now in their onward course that they see a flower by the wayside. They long to gather and make it their own. It is no staff they look for to support their steps, but merely a sweet nosegay to gladden them on their way; they pause in their eager pursuits, and pluck the flower, brush off the dew-drops that freshened it, and press on once more in the hot strife of man to man. They mean to be comforted by that little flower, not weakened or retarded; they have vouchsafed time to cull, they can spare none to cherish it. No, it must bloom beside them and for them, but not expect their aid; it will rarely get it!"

"And do you not think all this very selfish?" exclaimed Cecilia.

"Not necessarily so, but it may lead to selfishness."

"But is not such a life misery for a woman?"

"I do not think so. You cannot escape from your nature; therefore, accept it. Give out all the fragrance you can! From a flower becomes a tree of many blossoms! Intoxicate him with a thousand perfumes!"

"Oh, Mary!"

“Yes, I mean it; you are too coy, too shy, too cold!”

“I cold?”

“Yes, Cecilia; you are ice! There is more fire in one glance of that young girl’s eye, as she dances on her horse, than your whole life has kindled! I tell you you smother what you think might burn; for fear of a flame you put out the fire! You seek to illuminate—why do you deem it wicked to warm? You believe the Platonic philosophy a better teacher than the hints of the Greek goddess—but men like fire!”

“How do you know?”

“They must like it! I like it. Every one likes it who likes inspiration, who loves light, warmth, creative power. ’Tis that which gives intensity to art, to poetry; which burns into a race until a Shakspeare bursts forth, born of an imprisoned heat; that helps Galileo feel the earth moving through the stillness around him; that bids Michael Angelo breathe in marble, and set the Pantheon in the sky! Fire! What is it, but the signal of vitality, the very emblem of the inspired soul?”

“But, Mary, Christ had no fire. He was cold.”

“He had a great inward light, that lit with glory the past and the future—in whose soft flame the frozen hearts of centuries grew warm! Do not say he had no fire!”

“Well, I do not know how it is, Mary, but I am sure the coldest things often please the most. Look at those statues we saw in the Vatican, chiseled in perpetual snow! Look at the Jungfrau, whose summit never melts, yet for that very reason is admired; at the Greek drama, or Alfieri’s lifeless tragedies; at the marble cathedral in Milan;—can anything be colder? Or the stillness of

the Mediterranean ; or the sombre shadow of Lake Lucerne ; or, to crown everything, at our hero, Washington ! There, I have cited for you some part of the world's riches ! ”

“ Dear Cecilia, do not deceive yourself ! Your cathedral is the perfect type of grandeur united with grace ; its roof a petrified flower garden, its spires all pointing heavenward ; why, the whole expression and the form mean *warmth*, although the tint may be cold ; every statue you stopped to muse over was—if worthy of your gaze—instinct with the fiery soul of its creator, who, not being a god, could bestow on it only form, not breath ; Alfieri's plays, it is true, are chiseled, but surely they are impassioned ; they are intense, even, like himself ; and, if I must follow you, the Mediterranean, when calmest, is fraught with all the colors of the rainbow ; and, as for your Jungfrau, she is really fair only when she glows in the sunshine ! And—what more did you say ? Washington, and Lucerne ? Why, the lake is passion itself—dark, mysterious, dreamy—like a magnificent Sybil ; and Washington—well, what shall I say for him ?—He had, at least the passion of patriotism. ”

“ I do not care for him, at all, ” said Cecilia, petulantly.

“ No ! Just because he was cold. ”

“ But I do care for Henry. Do you think, Mary—tell me the truth—that if he loved me, he would go out, and stay out ? ”

“ I think, Cecilia, that you must be patient, cheerful always, indulgent, show no jealousy, and, above all, never spoil your pretty face with tears ; it makes you ugly, and your home dull. ”

“ You are frightfully frank, Mary ! ”

"You asked my opinion, and I give it to you for what it is worth. Let Henry have more freedom. Believe me, dear sister, this is good advice; men hate fetters."

"Men hate everything," rejoined Cecilia.

"Everything that they do not like, certainly," said Mary, smiling.

"And I hate men," said Cecilia, "with all my heart!"

"Now that is just the spirit I would have you in. Do anything, dear, so that you do it intensely! That is what men like!"

"No, Mary; you said a moment ago that they hated emotions."

"They love emotional women, but they detest a parade of the emotions."

"I cannot see the distinction; besides, I think it a mean aim to study nothing but their pleasure. Are they the lords of creation, pray, and we their slaves?"

"In our souls, Cecilia, I fear it is pretty much so. I think we *are* at too great pains to please them, and care too little to do well for its own sake. For that reason," she continued, blushing, "I have forsworn all men, and mean to die a maid. I will live for the truth—not for a man. The aim certainly does not seem romantic, yet in such a life, after all, there is a dash of romance. It may afford misery enough, I dare say, to compose an interesting biography. What do you think of it?"

"It is very late," said Cecilia, looking at the clock anxiously; "I think it is time for Henry to be at home."

"Do be patient, dear sister; do not worry."

"If he had gone anywhere but to see her, I could be patient."

"But you know, at the bottom of his heart, he is faithful and true to *you*. Trust him! There he comes! I shall run away. Now, don't reproach him."

It was Henry. He came home tired. Cecilia did not reproach him, but greeted him timidly. He replied curtly, glanced at his watch, and went up stairs.

CHAPTER VII.



TO Rosa that evening had been eventful. For weeks playbills and placards had proclaimed that on this occasion La Signorina Rosa would accomplish her celebrated feat of leaping three banks of roses.

There was a great rush for seats, and the amphitheatre was early thronged. Among the audience that sat eagerly expectant of the moment when Rosa should appear, were many persons rarely seen at a circus, whom her uncommon grace and beauty had drawn thither. Young swells, armed with lorgnette and eye-glass, attended to glorify the scene, and ladies of the first fashion ranged along the front rows lent a brilliant edging to the audience.

Livingstone, with Phillips and Elliot, were standing near the entrance through which Rosa was to pass into the ring. They had come late, knowing she would not make her appearance until some time after the spectacle had begun.

It was now nine o'clock. The Signorina had not yet entered, and the more candid spectators, with whistle, cry, and the harmonious heel, modestly hinted their impatience.

"This is an insufferable bore," said Mr. Elliot.

"It is just what I like," exclaimed Phillips. "I don't

object to the proximity of the grooms. The scent of the stables that hangs round them still invests them with a certain dignity—yes, what they call the dignity of labor. Hullo! what are they doing? Real roses! Old Cinizelli is simply ruining himself.”

They had brought into the circle three banks (so they were called in theatrical parlance) of fresh roses, and ranged them a few inches apart. At once Rosa rode Bruno into the ring. This evening she was to appear only *en Amazone*, for this single feat was all she meant to attempt.

Dressed in plain black velvet, with the cross of Savoy embroidered in gold on her skirt and a little jockey cap trimmed with roses on her head, she looked enchanting.

Bruno's neck likewise was garlanded with roses; and as the young girl passed Mr. Livingstone, he noticed that the handle of her whip was adorned with the same flowers.

With a hurried glance and a faint bow to our friends, she rode Bruno up to the triple hedge. “Smell them, Bruno,” she whispered; “they are sweet.” Then backing him round the ring, she made him rehearse all the *tours* and *poses* of his *repertoire*. Still keeping time to the music, she turned him once more toward the hedge, then suddenly quickening his pace and touching him with the whip, she cleared the roses at a bound. Rounding the circle at a hard gallop, she again urged her horse over the hedge. Without waiting to acknowledge the applause which greeted her success, she rode forward at increased speed for a third and last essay of her skill. Bruno rose gallantly, but his foot caught in the last bank, and when he had freed himself—Rosa was no longer in the saddle.

The faithful animal turned toward her, and for a moment stood perfectly still, then trembled intensely, while his nostrils dilated and his eyes were eloquent of grief. Could he have spoken, he would have called her tenderly by name.

Livingstone and his friends had witnessed the fall. George likewise, the poor clown, had seen it and darted toward her with a cry. Another moment, and the ushers had closed around her. She was apparently unconscious, and all could perceive, as she was borne away, that she did not move hand or foot. The audience surged forward; there was a buzz of voices, then breathless silence. At last the clown came out, deadly pale under his paint, and his voice shook as he said:

"Monsieur Cinizelli desires me to announce to the audience an intermission of ten minutes, after which the evening's entertainment will proceed as usual. Monsieur Cinizelli wishes me to say also that the young lady is not seriously injured, and to thank the audience for their kind interest in her welfare, as well as for their general patronage."

"Bravo! bravo!" they shouted. "Let's have her out. Rosa! Rosa! show yourself! Let's see that you are not hurt! Rosa! Rosa!"

Again the clown came forward, and there was silence.

"Mr. Cinizelli begs me to say that the young lady is grateful for your kindness, but she positively cannot appear again to-night. She has sprained her foot."

"Let's have a funny speech!" roared some boys. "Puffy, give us a fool's speech!" But the poor clown turned his back and walked slowly away, muttering something, of which "Fools yourselves" was alone audible.

"By thunder! he's insulting us!" shouted a young man near the ring, a large, rough butcher-boy.

"Let's over and go for him. Let's have his hide for a calf-skin." So saying, he, with three of his comrades, sprang into the circle and caught George by the neck. It was all done in a moment, but the poor fellow turned quickly, and with a dexterous movement, of which he was master, tripped his foremost opponent and threw him down.

"Down with the clown! Down with him!" yelled the others, enraged by the temporary opposition, and fell on him with such force that in another second he was under their feet, struggling in vain to rise. He was in their power now, and one of them raising his stick had just brought it down with a heavy thwack on his back, when Livingstone leaped over the railing and caught the man's hand as it was lifted for another blow.

"Three 'gainst one," he said. "Cowards! stand back, or I'll give you a thrashing you'll not forget for the rest of your lives; stand back, I say."

"Fair play! fair play!" began to be heard from the crowd, and the ruffians fell back. At this moment, the attention of the spectators was arrested and the tumult suddenly hushed by the reappearance of Rosa. She leaned over the unlucky clown and helped him to rise.

"Are you hurt, George?" she said; then turned swiftly on the man who had assailed him. She was very pale, and her eyes flashed as she cried, quivering with excitement: "Go back, you cowards! this ring is ours! it is mine! Go back where you have a right to stand, and if you dare again to pass the railing, you shall suffer for it."

They retreated over the barrier, and she, turning with a smile to Mr. Livingstone, put out her hand. "Thank you!" she said; "you are a kind friend to every one."

While she was speaking, her face grew livid, and she almost sank on the ground in pain. "Lean on me," he said quickly. "Miss Thornton, take my arm."

She looked up at him gratefully. "You are not ashamed to be seen with us, then?" she said, closing her small white teeth on her under-lip. She leaned on him heavily, as he assisted her out of the ring.

"What an excitement we have had," he said; "but it will soon be over now; the *entre-acte* is almost past, and the moment a new feat is begun, the crowd will forget everything else. There are our friends Elliot and Phillips. They are waiting to see and condole with you."

"Will you take me to my dressing-room? I do not think I can speak to any one just now. It is foolish, but I do feel very ill."

Mr. Livingstone looked down at her; she was so young, so delicate, and so lonely; with none to protect or care for her. He felt all his manhood roused within him to succor and shield the poor young thing. He forgot in this moment her beauty and her fascinations, and thought of her only with pity. Rosa felt instinctively what was passing in his mind.

"Good-night!" she said, her face pale with pain. "Good-night! you have been very kind to George. I do not know how to thank you; he deserves it. Poor dear George; how did the brutes dare touch him?"

"You are too ill to be left alone. Where is Monsieur Cinizelli?"

"He was not well enough to be here. The management was left to me to-night, and it was I told George—poor fellow!—to go in and quiet the audience. Our company is so familiar with this business that it does not need a regular manager; but we must have some superior authority to govern us."

"I will not say good-night now. I will take you home."

"I cannot walk," said Rosa, her voice broken by a twinge of pain.

"I did not mean you should. I will get a carriage."

"Will it not be too much trouble?"

"It will be a pleasure."

"Thank you. Then I will change my dress while you are gone; I will not be long about it."

As Mr. Livingstone turned to look for his friends, they joined him.

"You are in luck to-night, old boy," said Phillips. "What have you done with her?"

"She is in her dressing-room."

"Were you there with her all this time? You're a sly fellow."

"I do not care to hear such remarks," said Livingstone, sternly. "Miss Thornton is ill; she is in great pain. Mr. Cinizelli is absent, and I am going to find a carriage and take her home."

"You need not go far. I will take her. Luckily my coupé is outside. I ordered it to wait. My instincts are always right. I had an idea something would happen, so I told Isaac not to stir till I came out."

"Thanks," returned Mr. Livingstone, coldly; "I will not trouble you."

"I say, Livingstone, old boy, don't be offish. You may drive home with her yourself, if you will. I'll leave you tête-a-tête and cool my jealousy in the evening air, with Elliot for fellow-sufferer."

"Thank you; I will not deprive you of your carriage," and he passed on into the street. The air felt fresh and pleasant upon his flushed face. There had been something in Phillips' manner which annoyed and irritated him. Phillips often did irritate him, and yet he did not like to throw him over, for they had been college classmates, and Livingstone had frequently, in those old days, helped Phillips out of scrapes which otherwise would have sundered somewhat abruptly his connection with Harvard.

Mr. Livingstone soon found a carriage, and returned to the circus for Rosa. She was waiting for him at the door of her little tent. The curtain was raised and everything within was visible. There was a huge trunk, where Rosa's dresses were kept, a little dressing-table, with a mirror on it and a bit of board, equipped with three legs, by way of chair.

"Will you come in?" said Rosa, smiling, "you can sit on the trunk."

"No, thank you; the carriage is ready and at your service."

She tried to take a step forward, but her foot gave way under her weight, and Mr. Livingstone again offered his arm. She moved slowly and held her lips compressed. They passed Elliot and Phillips, who lifted their hats and followed.

"I have been trying," said Mr. Phillips, "to persuade Livingstone to give you my coupé, Miss Rosa; but he

thought there was less danger of infection in a public hack."

Rosa laughed; but the laugh caught in her throat.

"I hope you are not seriously hurt?" said Mr. Elliot.

"I hope not," returned Rosa, with a doleful smile. "Oh, how delightful the fresh air feels. What a lovely night! Behind us we leave heat, weariness, danger, pain—above us bends a cool, peaceful sky that seems the perfect opposite to all below."

Mr. Livingstone opened the door and helped her into the carriage; then, looking in her face, said, "Shall I come in?"

"Oh, pray do not leave me alone," and the face turned toward him was almost tearful.

He laughed and sprang into the carriage.

The door was shut, and with "Good-night!" to the other gentlemen, Rosa sank back, exhausted. Her eyes were closed, and in the moonlight her face looked so deadly pale that Mr. Livingstone grew half frightened.

For some time she sat motionless; at length, opening her large, dark eyes, and fixing them on him: "I am glad George was not hurt," she said, "for his mother's sake—and for his own—he is so good."

"And do you not think of yourself? I trust that you, too, are not hurt."

"I hope not; but the pain is very great. I dare say it will pass away after a good night's sleep."

"But I fear you will not sleep. Is there any one at your lodgings to take charge of you?"

"No; no one."

"Poor child!" he said, kindly; "you ought to have a mother with you."

A large tear rolled silently down Rosa's cheek. She made no reply.

"Don't you think I should go for a doctor? It would be safer to have him see your foot. It may be nothing; it may be something serious. At any rate, it is far better to have it examined at once."

"I do not want a doctor."

"No, but you are a child: and children, you know, never want what is good for them. You must have a doctor, and to-night."

"It is too late now," said Rosa.

"Better late than later. I shall insist on it, and will send you a good doctor. He is an old man, and will seem like a father to you."

"I am glad he is old."

"Why are you glad he is old? Do you like old people better than the young?"

"No, but once I had a doctor, when I was very ill of a fever; he was young—and—" The blood rushed to her face, and Mr. Livingstone could see that she was scarlet.

"And what?"

"And—I did not like him," said Rosa.

"Poor child," he said, half in soliloquy.

"You are very good to me," she said; "you are not like the rest."

"How are the rest?"

"I do not know. They are different."

He longed to say: "Which do you prefer?" but he suppressed the desire, and bethought himself how low and despicable it would be to take any advantage, even to gratify a moment's vanity, of a being so young and

so defenseless; indeed, he felt infinite pity for her. It was the first time that Livingstone had ever found himself alone with a woman not of his own class. This fair young creature had all the instincts of a lady. It was only her profession, he told himself, which debarred her from society, and it awakened a sentiment of peculiar delicacy to reflect how, completely unguarded as she was, she yet maintained so much natural dignity; and how few men there were who would not abuse her very isolation, which so saddened him. Would that he had the right to shield her from rudeness and insult!

"Miss Thornton," he said, after a long pause, "could you not live with Mme. Cinizelli? She would be such a protector to you."

"I should have liked it; but Mons. and Mme. Cinizelli are very rich, and I could not afford to live at the same rate. Mme. Cinizelli has invited me to live with them, but it would wound my pride to be dependent upon any one, and besides—" She hesitated.

"And besides?"

"I prefer to be alone."

"May I ask why?"

"Because I may do as I please. I like to read and study, which I would not be free to do living with others who have different tastes; and besides—"

"And besides?" repeated Livingstone, smiling.

"You will think it strange, if I confess the truth."

"No; I love the truth—better than anything else in the world."

"Well, I cannot bear to be continually with people that are not ladies and gentlemen."

"But—" Livingstone hesitated, and said no more.

"But what?" exclaimed Rosa. "You mean that I must needs, then, be always alone, because I never can associate with ladies and gentlemen. Do you imagine," she continued, her lip curling, "that I consort with those men and women whom you have seen in our troupe? Why, they all hate me, because I will never talk with them. I would not bow to one of them in the streets."

• "That is hardly Christian," said Livingstone.

"I do not care to be Christian toward them," she answered, reddening. "What have they ever done for me? Have they ever sought to lift me, or one another, above the level of our vulgar life? No; they would have me coarse and low, like themselves. I do not know why I should be what I am. I loathe everything about me. I loathe, most of all, myself. I love only my horse, my Bruno. He, at least, knows I am not the common thing the world believes me. I tell him everything, and he understands it better than others do." She continued, in a broken voice, "Yes, Bruno knows that I follow this poor trade because I am poor; that I only wait the chance of something worthier; that meanwhile I go on riding for hire because I have no other means of livelihood. If I tried to teach, people would scoff at me, because I had once been a circus-rider, and they would leave me to starve. I should not mind that so much for myself, but there is my mother, who might starve too. If I wished to go out as a common servant, no one would take me." Here she broke down, and covered her face with her hands.

Mr. Livingstone waited till she became calm. When she stopped crying, he said, gently, "Let me, as

well as Bruno, be your friend. I know all that you confide to him. I respect you from the bottom of my heart, and I know well that there is nothing in you which is not high and noble. I know that everybody who has known, must wholly honor you—must—” he stopped, then added, “must long to be of service to you. Poor child! thrust out into such a lonely world! It seems to me as cruel a destiny as a little white lamb abandoned to ravening wolves.”

“I show my teeth sometimes,” returned Rosa, looking up at him suddenly, with a smile. “I am much more like a lioness than a lamb. They are all afraid of me; they must and shall be afraid of me!”

“Why did not your mother come here with you?”

Rosa hastily turned her head; then answered: “I could not afford to pay her passage; but I send home money to my mother. She is very poor. See, here we are at my door. The drive was so pleasant, I almost forgot my pain. Oh, how shall I get out? I cannot rise: my foot hurts me so.”

Mr. Livingstone did not answer, but quietly lifting her in his arms, bade the coachman wait, and carried her up the steps. The door was open.

“Where do you go?” he said.

“Oh, it is up stairs. How kind you are.”

He carried her up one flight. “Another?” he asked.

“Yes, and then again another. Set me down. I weigh more than you imagined—one hundred and ten pounds. But really,” she continued, “I can walk now. It was only that my ankle had stiffened for a moment.”

“By no means. I do not feel your weight more than a feather’s.”

"That is my door."

"Who takes you home commonly?"

"Mons. Cinizelli, always."

"But when he is ill—as he was to-night—who then?"

"He was never ill before. Well, George would have brought me home."

"Good-night."

"Good-night, Mr. Livingstone. I cannot express my gratitude in words; you would not believe them." She did not extend her hand, nor did he offer his. He had gone.

Rosa shut the door, bolted it, and then began to prepare for the night; but her foot and ankle were already much swollen, and she had to compress her lips tightly to avoid screaming, while loosening her boot.

She undressed herself with difficulty, and lay down thoroughly exhausted. Her head ached, her foot ached. She felt that she could not sleep. Her head was tossing feverishly on the pillow, when she heard some one stumbling along the hall, and "This way, sir." "Oh," she said to herself, "it is that abominable George." There was a knock at the door.

"Go away. I am better."

"But you must open the door, Miss Rosy."

"Go away, I say; my foot is quite well."

"But it is the doctor, Miss Rosy, who wants to come in. I brought him."

Rosa put out her hand for a lucifer-match, but found none. "Wait a minute," she said, and groping in the darkness, threw a dressing-gown about her, made her way to the door, and opened it.

"Who's there?" she said, resolutely.

"'Tis I, young lady. A friend of yours—Mr. Livingstone—sends me, and his sympathy. I am to look to a certain broken ankle, I believe; but in this darkness I can see nothing."

"I will light a match, sir," said a voice from the hall.

"Go away, George, and shut the door instantly. Doctor, will you kindly strike this match for me?"

"Pray don't send the poor fellow away. He is quite heart-broken with your mishap. Besides, I shall want him to get us some medicines. May I tell him to wait?"

"There is no danger of his going," said Rosa, impatiently.

"Let me see," the doctor muttered; "head slightly feverish; pulse high; now for the foot. Ah, there is no time to lose, though the sudden swelling ought to keep down the pain, I fancy. It is not a sprain, my dear—only a bruise; but a very serious bruise. Was the pain very sharp at the time?"

"I lost consciousness," said Rosa, "for a moment."

"We must send to the apothecary's for some aconite and arnica. May I tell your servant?"

"He is not my servant."

"Your slave, then."

"Nor that either," laughed Rosa; "he is the clown in our circus."

"Well, I am glad to see you in better humor. Your laugh lights up your face and makes you look charming. Livingstone was not so far wrong, after all."

Rosa blushed.

"There, now I understand the case, perfectly," continued the doctor, with a smile. "You must lie quietly

in bed all day to-morrow. Don't think of getting up till I see you again."

"Suppose you were not to come for a week," said Rosa.

"I shall come, my dear young lady, sooner than that. I shall come to-morrow; and, meanwhile, don't alarm yourself; there is nothing serious to be feared. In a few days we shall be all right again, provided we lie still. When your clown returns, just wet a bandage with the arnica—you will find it prepared for you—and bind it about your foot; keep your foot bathed all night with the same lotion. And—one thing more—drop a few drops of aconite in a glass of water, and take a table-spoonful every hour."

"Oh, please, doctor, don't go till the man returns. There is a drug shop very near us, and he will be here again in a moment. He is always quick in his movements."

"It is his profession," said the doctor, smiling. "What a pity," he added, "if this pretty foot of ours could never spring again into the stirrup."

"I should not much care," said Rosa.

"I should."

"Did you ever see me ride, doctor?" Rosa asked. Her eyes brightened, and her face, flushed as it was with pain, turned eagerly toward her visitor.

"Did I ever see you? No, my little lady. Old fogies, you know, like me, don't have much leisure to run about and amuse ourselves. We leave all that to the youthful and lazy members of our fraternity. But I often hear you spoken of by my young lady patients. Some of them are quite wild about you, and absolutely catch the horse-

fever after seeing you caracole about the ring at the circus."

"They really give that name to a fever in Italy, doctor. They call any high fever brought on by any nervous excitement—bad-temper, for instance—the horse-fever."

"Are your Italian tempers so very bad that doctors are called in to mend them?"

"Indeed they are. I was once in such a rage myself that my friends applied twelve leeches, put me to bed, and called a physician."

"May I ask if the disease is a common one?" said the doctor.

"Oh, yes, very," laughed Rosa; but her laugh ceased abruptly, as it often did. "You see, we have such gusty feelings in Italy—not like yours; there all is fire—here everything is ice."

"Well, if you should happen to fall into one of those passions, I should like to be sent for."

"I've no fear of that. I fancy your climate chills one's temper. I fell ill in Italy, because a man kicked and beat my Bruno—that is my horse, doctor. He had been sent me from England by my father. You see, I like all animals; they never hurt your feelings as human beings do; but I adore my horse. I abused the man fearfully, I'm afraid, for he kicked Bruno again, and then I seized my whip and lashed him with all my might—and then I fell ill."

The doctor laughed heartily. There was a knock at the door.

"Will you open it for me, please?" said Rosa.

"Certainly."

The doctor opened the door, and there stood poor George, dismay and sympathy written all over his face

"Here are the medicines," he said.

"Thank you; I will put them here," said the doctor, placing them on a chair by the bedside.

"Thank you, George," called out Rosa; "and thank you very much, doctor. Good-night."

"Good-night, my little patient. Your friend, Mr Livingstone, is waiting for me below in the carriage. What may I say to him?"

"Tell him the pain is gone," said Rosa.

"What! before the remedies are applied? In justice to myself, as one who lives by his profession, I can hardly say that. Good-night, once more, and *au revoir*." He closed the door.

"I cannot get up and bolt it to-night," thought Rosa. "I must trust to fate. I will leave my candle burning, and I dare say the faithful George will watch without till daybreak. Poor fellow! I wish I might do something to make him happy."

Rosa obeyed the doctor's instructions, and then, being indeed exhausted, fell fast asleep. It was morning when she was awakened by the doctor's voice.

"Who is there?" she cried.

The door was ajar, and there the doctor stood peering in, with an air of great good humor.

"To our profession," he said, "all things are permitted. Against us neither bolts nor bars avail."

"Doctor, how kind you are. I have slept ever since you said good-night. Is it very late? I am really ashamed you should have found me sleeping."

"It is eleven o'clock, young lady. That is pretty well

for an invalid. Do you look forward to repeating your customary antics to-night?"

"I hardly know. I wish," she added, quickly, "I had been hurt so badly that I could never go there again."

"Come, that is folly. Let us examine your foot. Oh, it will be all right in a day or so; but you must keep perfectly quiet meanwhile."

"Mayn't I get up, doctor? Pray say yes." She looked up in his face so beseechingly that he could not find it in his heart to refuse her.

"You might have a change of air, perhaps," said he. "Now, were I a handsome young buck, you should let me drive you out. By the way, is there no sitting-room on this floor? I noticed, as I passed, that the door adjoining yours was open and the chamber empty. Suppose you go in there. It will be far better for you than remaining here, shut up and half-stifled, all day long."

"I will try," she said. "This house, or most of it, is let in apartments, something in the European way, except, of course, that the people living here are of a very humble class; but the place is quiet and respectable enough. The house is owned by a lady—a widow. One day, in passing, I saw a placard in the window, and asked to look at the rooms; but when she knew who I was," added Rosa, coloring—"for I thought it wrong not to tell her my profession—she did not want to take me; but she felt sorry to see me so lonely and forlorn, and at last she concluded to let me have the room."

"And the rest of your troupe—where do they live?"

"I am sure I do not know," said Rosa, looking up with wondering eyes; "only Monsieur and Madame Cini-zelli—they are at the Ashland House. That is not far

away; so, if I need anything, I can run there in a moment."

"Ahem! ahem!" and the doctor cleared his throat; "then you are quite alone here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, my child, you must take good care of yourself. I shall call once more to see if all is right, and that will be all, no doubt, you will require from the old doctor. You must continue those applications to your foot, and I engage your name will soon be on the bills again. Good morning."


"Good morning."

"Never," thought Rosa, as he closed the door; "never again. My career as a circus-rider is over. I am glad this accident occurred. It will make everything easier for me."

She rose with some difficulty and dressed herself; then taking up a book, she opened her door and looked out. The door of the next room was ajar, and she helped herself toward it by leaning on the banisters of the narrow hall. Within the chamber was an old table and a sort of lounge—nothing more.

"I will lie down here," she thought, "and wait till the servant comes; then I will ask her to bring me something to eat." She threw herself on the hard sofa, and opening her book, soon became completely absorbed.

CHAPTER VIII.

OSA was still poring over her book, oblivious of everything else, when there was a gentle knock at the door. She looked up; it was Mr. Livingstone.

"Come in," she said, and blushed deeply. "How kind you are."

"May I come in? I should never have taken such a liberty; but I saw my good friend, the doctor, this morning, and he told me what good advice he had given you, and that he thought I might find you here. I rang at your front door half-a-dozen times, and, nobody answering, opened it, then groped about the hall, which was dark as Erebus, to find some one to take up my card. But not a soul appeared, and so I pressed forward on a voyage of discovery. How do you feel to-day? You still look very pale." And, indeed, the color that flushed Rosa's face when he entered had quite faded away.

"I have not breakfasted yet," said Rosa. "I suppose that makes one feel a little weak."

"Nothing to eat! what does that mean?"

"You see, there are no bells in these rooms, and I could not go down stairs, as usual, so I have been waiting for the maid-servant, but it seems a forlorn hope."

"And how much longer do you mean to wait?"

"Until she comes, of course!" and Rosa quietly folded her arms.

He took up his hat. "I shall not be gone a moment."

"Where are you going?"—and Rosa put out her hand to stop him. He looked at it as if he longed to fold it in his own; but he withstood the temptation.

"No matter—with your leave—I shall go now, and return in a few minutes. Here are some books I ventured to bring you; you might glance over them meanwhile."

Her face beamed. "How very kind," she said. "I love books—yes better—better than anything."

"Better than Bruno?"

"Ah, no—not better than my darling horse. But better than—"

"Than people, say?"

"I know of no people I should love"—and her face darkened.

"But, if people love you."

"I do not care for their love." She averted her face, then added: "They have not the kindest way of showing it—besides"—she turned suddenly and confronted him—"what is love? I know nothing about it; but I have fancied it something generous, self-forgetful, swift to make any sacrifice for the one beloved—not travestied in cruel selfishness, in arid egotism, in—in despicable meanness. *That* is the only love I have ever met with. No, no; I should not say it. There is one who is not so. I am ungrateful, and forget him sometimes, merely because, Mr. Livingstone, he is not what people call a gentleman—as if he had not a soul a thousand times manlier, more loyal than you all. Often, when I think of him, I want to punish myself, for, before God, that

poor clown is a better man than any gentleman I ever knew."

"I dare say that may be true," said Mr. Livingstone, gravely; "but for fear you may say something a great deal less flattering to me than the words you have just uttered, I shall hasten off; but I will inflict myself upon you once more to-day." He bowed, and ran down stairs.

Rosa sat for some moments motionless; then, with a sigh, she began turning over the books he had left. Shakspeare, in five volumes. She was delighted. "Oh, that is, of all things, what I wanted most," she exclaimed—and soon was poring over "Othello."

She was already deep in the second act of the tragedy when a step which she rightly guessed to be Mr. Livingstone's was heard on the stairs.

"Come in," she said, looking up.

"I have brought you some breakfast." He untied his parcel. "There are some grapes and oranges that will remind you, perhaps of home, and here is something more solid—genuine American food, in the shape of rolls and chicken sandwiches. Will you have them?"

"Yes, indeed; I am really hungry. You are very good and kind. What beautiful grapes. They are like those we have in Italy; just such as I used to pull for myself when they glowed in the autumnal sun. They are delicious. Do eat some"—and she held out a bunch to him.

"Don't tempt me to rob you of them."

"But I long to have you share them with me."

"Then I will take some, gladly. Aren't you going to have a sandwich?"

"I mean to eat everything you brought. How nice they are. I wish I had some water."

"Let me get you a glass."

"No, no; please don't: I can draw some in my room. She went out limping slightly. "You see," she said, looking over her shoulder, "I am not very lame, after all."

He took up the book she had been reading when he first knocked at her door that morning. It was "*Adrienne le Couvreur*."

Rosa came back.

"Do you like this?" he said. "You were reading it."

"It is very interesting."

"May I ask where you got it?"

"At a bookstall in some out-of-the-way street. You see, it is a much-worn copy. Book-hunting is the only extravagance I indulge in. Most of my little savings go for odd volumes, picked up at second-hand shops. The worst of it is that when I go away I have to leave them behind, for if I took them all, in time they would quite fill a van. But never fear, my Shakspeare shall go with me when I leave New York."

"Thank you. Have you read any of his plays before?"

Rosa's eyes opened widely. "Of course I have. Did you really suppose me a savage, because I ride a horse passably well? But, I understand it; I understand it. It could not be otherwise: and yet it never occurred to me until I began to read and think, what an abyss lay between me and other women. I never dreamed, when I began to ride, that men would consider me a degraded

being because of an honest effort to earn my bread. It seemed to me so much freer and nobler too, to move in unison with my beautiful Bruno, and then read at home, and strive to make something of myself, than to toil all day in a factory—a slave at a slave's trade. I could have been a factory girl, of course—or I might have gone out to service—but it would have killed me. To be ordered about by everybody, subject always to their whims and moods; to be reminded day and night of the mean thing I was, till the sneer crushed my soul. No, I could not have borne it; it might not have broken my heart, but would have left it a dead thing. But, as it is, all I have to do is to keep aloof from others, and I am free, independent, with none to control or command me. And sometimes," she added, haughtily, "I fail to see, Mr. Livingstone, why my position need be thought degraded."

"It is not degraded," he cried, warmly. "No man living that has once seen you could conceive you doing anything that might degrade you. There is an association of ideas, perhaps, that leads us to see things not as they are, but as prejudice suggests they must be. I suppose the traditional reputation of classes must make, now and then, its victims. It is the society you are presumed to mingle with—the publicity in which you live—"

"But," said Rosa, "actors and actresses lead public lives."

"Yes, the case is somewhat different. They are more hedged about than you are. At any rate, theirs is a more intellectual profession. Not that what they nightly repeat becomes, at length, a part of themselves, or reflects

at all their own thoughts and lives—far from it—yet, as we were saying, so potent is the association of ideas, that people naturally invest them with some attributes of the refinement by which they see them surrounded; it seems as if they must absorb some rays, at least, of the light transmitted through them; and, I fancy, do you know, that no one who had not some intellectual training or bias, would dream of going on the stage; while—”

“While any coarse creature, void of brains, but possessed of physical strength or skill, might follow our calling,” said Rosa, covering her face with her hands. “I see it; I see it now. I was too young to see it then.”

“Forgive me,” he said, feelingly; “forgive me, if I have pained you.”

“Oh, not at all,” she answered, bitterly. “We are so thick-skinned, you know, that we can hardly feel a thrust—like the rhinoceros there, in our menagerie—quite curiously tough.”

“It is you who are unkind, now.”

“No, no; I did not mean it; I was unjust; but your words stung me, somehow, and my own thoughts goaded me on.” She paused a moment, and then said: “Mr. Livingstone, you have been so kind to me that I can find the courage—almost—to ask a further favor. I have determined to part with Bruno.”

“Your horse?”

“Yes, my horse. What shall I ride, then, you mean? I shall not ride any more. Did you fancy I would go on for ever making a spectacle of myself? Oh, it is long since something has been working here,”—she pressed her hand to her brow—“but of late, for the first time, I

have seen my way clear. Mr. Phillips,—your friend—has offered me five thousand dollars—a fortune—for my Bruno, and I have decided to accept his offer. He told me I might think it over, and I have done so. What at first looked so terrible, now seems my one chance in life—a chance thrust in my hand by Providence. Will you tell him from me that I accept? I would rather not write him. Now this, you see, will put an end to my engagement with Mons. Cinizelli—this, and my happy accident. I have pondered, day and night, how I might break off my engagement and yet deal honestly by my employer. Now it has all come round in the best possible way.”

“Have you any further orders?” Mr. Livingstone turned to go.

“No, nothing else. You are not going?”

“I must.”

“I shall read my Shakspeare all the rest of the day.”

At this moment, Mary, the Irish servant, appeared at the open door with a bouquet of beautiful flowers.

“How lovely!” said Rosa.

“Indeed, miss, and there’s a gentleman below that’s jist lovelier than the flowers, and he wants to know if he can obtain admittance to ye.”

“No,” said Rosa, hastily, “I do not wish to see anyone.” Mary looked up at Mr. Livingstone with rather an impertinent smile.

“Well, miss, and what shall I say to him? Shall I tell him there’s another young gentleman got his place?”

“Say,” said Rosa, sternly, “that I am engaged.”

The girl vanished with a look of wonder.

Presently there were steps on the stairs, and Mary re-appeared at the door.

"He says, miss, there's a note he had for ye, in case ye was out."

"Give it me," said Rosa. "Is he waiting?"

"Sure, and I don't know."

"Wait in the hall, and I will see if there is an answer. Will you excuse me if I read it, Mr. Livingstone?"

"Certainly."

She opened the letter. Mr. Livingstone recognized the seal as the envelope fell to the floor. For the life of him he could not keep his eyes off her face. As she read on, he saw the blood mount to her brow and stain it purple, her lips wreath scornfully, and beneath the long, dark lashes the fire shoot from her eyes. She bent her head over the letter and read it again and again, then crushed it in her hand.

"Mary," she called, in a hoarse voice, "say there is no answer."

"Very well, miss."

Rosa sat motionless for some moments, her eyes fixed on the wall before her. Mr. Livingstone saw there was some painful struggle going on within her, and would not, even by a word, recall his presence to her mind. At length she shook back her head, as if to press home the tears that were ready to fall, and said:

"You have been very kind to me; I thank you; good-by." She put out her hand; he took it in both of his and held it for an instant.

"Good-by. May I come again to see you?"

"Yes—no. I do not care. I shall not be here long. Where do you live?"

"Do you mean, where my house is here in town?"

"Yes, the street and the number."

Mr. Livingstone smiled. "I live at No. — Fifth Avenue. Shall I have the pleasure of seeing you there?"

"You are very impertinent," said she, quickly.

"That is a very unkind remark."

"I know it. It really was what I hastily called yours. Forgive me. I do not know why I am so peevish to-day."

"Good-by. With your leave, I will send you some more books. May I have one of those roses for my button-hole?"

"No."

Mr. Livingstone had gone; how lonely the room was now. Rosa seemed to see him still, where he stood a few minutes ago, gazing down at her with kind, brown eyes, in which she found so much meaning.

She looked around, dreamily; she half-expected to find them still upon her. Then she moved slowly to the table, caught up the flowers which lay there, and flung them from the window. She picked up the letter, which had been thrown on the floor, tore it into shreds and burned them. She waited till the last fragment was in ashes, then turned away.

"Vile, wicked man," she said; "could you not spare me that cruel shame? Whenever and wherever we meet—within doors, or in the street—no matter who is with you, I will expose you before the world. No, it is not well that anything should shield a man like you. Love! Yes, I was right; such men profane the name of love. Has he no mother—no sister? Why, I have

heard him speak of both. What would he do if they were thus insulted? Coward! He knows I am poor, friendless, and a woman. He imagines I cannot protect myself. But here I make a vow to revenge myself on them all—yes, all! I will go forth and become great—famous; and they shall come one day and kneel at my feet—but I will spurn them. Oh, they are too many, and too cruel. The wrongs they have heaped upon me! What! because I have no mother—no one to ward off their insolence. Is it not enough to appear to a man, with a man's heart in him? Is my profession indeed so odious—so degraded—that it must stigmatize and brand with shame every member of it, however innocent? *He* seemed to think so, just now. *He* did not spare me either.

“I must write Mr. Livingstone immediately. He will boast, I suppose, of getting a note from the circus-girl, and will never mention why I wrote it. Ah, no, he is not so mean as that. I am unjust to him. He has been constantly good and kind to me. But how—how can I tell that it is not a cunning cloak to some new baseness? They have so many disguises!” and the poor girl wrung her hands. “They are like glittering scorpions; they charm the eye, and while you are gazing at them, they sting. They are to be amused at the risk of our lives; but woe to us if we succeed in amusing them.”

She sat down and wrote hurriedly, read the note, tore it up and tried again. What she had written did not suit her; she bit her pen. It shocked her delicacy to think Mr. Livingstone might guess the reasons why she wrote, and think less highly of her for having been the mark of evil. Impatient with herself she wrote:

“MR. LIVINGSTONE:

“*Dear Sir:* I asked you, this morning, to be so kind as to offer my horse, Bruno, for sale to Mr. Phillips. I have changed my mind. I do not care to sell it to him. Please do me the favor not to mention it at all.

“Yours respectfully,

“ROSA THORNTON.”

“Mary!” she called, for she heard the servant’s step in the next room.

“What is it, miss?” said Mary, answering her summons

“Will you do me the kindness—be a good girl!—to take this letter for me to that number in Fifth Avenue? I shall be so much obliged to you.”

“Who is it to?” said Mary.

“You can see the address, Mary, on the envelope,” replied Rosa.

“No; I can’t read.”

It was hard for Rosa to tell her whom she was writing to. She dreaded the coarse, impertinent stare that was sure to follow the explanation, but she nerved herself to the effort, and said:

“Mr. Livingstone, — Fifth Avenue.”

“That’s the gentleman that was up in your room, wasn’t it?”

Rosa wanted to answer: “That is no affair of yours,” but she thought it best to say, “Yes, that was Mr. Livingstone.”

“Well, he’s as purty as a picture, and you’d make a purty match of it, and a purty couple is a nater thing than living alone.”

Rosa turned aside, feigning to gather up her books.

That evening a note was handed to Mr. Livingstone. It was written in a fine, delicate hand that was quite unknown to him. Opening it, he glanced first at the signature, and his heart gave a leap as he saw the name, "Rosa Thornton." He read it over and over again.

"I thought so," he muttered. "I thought so. I should like to shoot him. Poor child, I am glad she is going away. It is better so. How lovely she is! and how lovable! I hate to ask my mother for money. Yet, after all, how could her means be better employed than in helping this poor girl? She has offered me a horse a hundred times; Bruno must be bought, and Rosa freed from this hateful life. She has some scheme on foot; it is not for me to inquire what it is—but in her country much can be done with twenty-five thousand francs." Livingstone felt something very like a pang, as he thought how far away she would be there; but he sat down and addressed her as follows:

"MISS THORNTON:

"I have received the letter with which you honored me. I have another friend who has been long anxious to secure Bruno, and is ready to give the sum you mentioned. If you will favor me with an answer in the affirmative, I will forward to you, in my friend's name, the price of your beautiful horse. Believe me, very respectfully and sincerely,

"Your friend,

"ERNEST LIVINGSTONE."

By some shortcoming of the post, Rosa did not receive

this letter until the morning of the third day after she had dispatched her own. She had looked for an immediate answer, and passed a sleepless night, turning over in her mind her present position and her future plans. What was she to do? She had no resources that she could depend on now. Bruno was the only thing of value she possessed on earth, and since she could not sell him, how was she to escape from her present life? She had been trying so long—so long—to lay aside money enough to leave the circus for ever; but it was slow work. She had not only to lodge and feed herself, but to dress well, since much of her favor with the public arose from the fact that she was always handsomely and tastefully dressed.

Moreover, she knew very well that Mons. Cinizelli's great success was due wholly to herself. He had often said, if he lost her, he should lose his fortune too, and Rosa hardly knew how to break to him her resolution. But it must be done. She had resolved at once and for ever to cut herself away from her former life, and nothing on earth should hold her hand. She would go to him and offer him Bruno at some very low price. Surely he would not let slip such a chance as that! A horse so marvelously trained could not be found every day.

Her foot seemed much better already, and she determined to call betimes at the Ashland House. She dressed herself as prettily as she could, in a plain black gown, with a little white chip hat, and sallied forth to confront an Italian storm in the mouth of Monsieur Cinizelli.

Monsieur and Madame Cinizelli were in, and Rosa was shown to their room.

"Come in!" said Mme. Cinizelli, in answer to Rosa's timid knock.

"Eh, bien!" cried M. Cinizelli, with a trace of irritation in his tone. "How are you, mademoiselle? A little pale, eh! since the accident. Well, you have played the mischief with me and my affairs. We have had, as you know, two representations, and the proceeds have been just half what they were. I don't think we should have taken even that if people had not come out of curiosity to see the place where you had your fall. The day after your accident, George told me there was an incessant stream of inquirers, calling to learn how much you were hurt. This public is *bete!*"—he shrugged his shoulders. "When shall I announce your reappearance?"

Rosa hesitated. She was sorry to give him pain. He had been her teacher, her patron, and she knew she was about to deal him a heavy blow.

"Your pay is high, mademoiselle!" he continued. "Not that I would force you to appear, but I understood the doctor pronounced you nearly well. You need not repeat your standing feats for several days. You can ride *en Amazone*. After all, an audience likes that as well as anything, and it will be no strain on your foot; you can sit as easy on your horse as in a chair."

"My own!" said Mme. Cinizelli, feebly.

"Well, it is so, Maria, my soul; it is so. The Ballordi Brothers, last week, did not draw at all. The great trapeze jump fell absolutely dead. These people here are mad about this girl, and there'll be the devil to pay if we don't give them another sight, and that forthwith, of our equestrienne. It was she who drew in France—

it is she who draws here. Now, when shall we mount you again, Signorina?"

"I have come to tell you," said Rosa, "that I do not mean to ride any more. I have long been tired of a circus life, and though I am truly sorry for your loss, I cannot regret an accident which puts an end for ever to my riding in the ring."

"*Per Dio!*" cried Mons. Cinizelli, growing purple in the face, and striking his forehead.

"My own!" said Madame, much frightened.

"I shall go crazy with rage!"

"My own!" wailed his consort. "My heart! do not be angry!"

"I tell you I'll not be played with. We made a contract—she and I—and I'll have her in the ring, if I have to carry her there myself."

"My soul!" cried Mme. Cinizelli, "be calm; tranquilize yourself, for pity's sake!" and she turned very pale.

"I'll carry her in myself," he repeated, fiercely.

With compressed lips, Rosa watched the storm she had evoked. She knew well those Italian tempers; her own was not proof against sharp trial.

"Diavolo! Do you think to play with me?" he went on, with flashing eyes. "I'll strap you on Bruno's back, like Mazeppa—as you used to ride in the hippodrome, before you put on such grand airs. Do you hear? Do you imagine—Corpo di Baccho!—because you are in America you can do as you please?"

"I think," said Rosa, her eyes reflecting the anger of his own, "that you do not know what you are saying. I am surely free to do as I please, whether in America

or Italy. Our agreement was simply this: I was to stay as long as I wished, you to keep me as long as you wished; and either might make other engagements when he chose."

"Where are you going now?" shouted Mons. Cinizelli, "To the devil, I suppose, with one of those soft-spoken young gentlemen, who will fool you—fool you—until you have lost your soul!"

"My own! Do not!" his wife interposed again, feebly. "Do not get excited!"

"Take care!" Rosa drew herself up to her full height, and her words came slow and hoarse. "I have borne a great deal from you, monsieur, because you have generally been considerate and kind, and in your heart, I know, have wished me well. But there are some things I can bear from no one."

"You'll have to bear a good deal yet from me."

"My own, my soul! you lower yourself," said his wife.

"Curse me if I pay you one centime."

"Yes, you will pay me," returned Rosa, "what I have toiled hard to earn, because it is mine; and I know you too well to fear that you will try to keep it from me. You may deduct my wages for the last few nights. From to-day our agreement ends."

He struck his head in helpless rage. "Such baseness! Who would have believed it? But, be it so; to meet with ingratitude is the curse of man. Adieu! mademoiselle! Think not to get anything more out of me. The devil take you, and make of you what he likes!"

Rosa turned to go. "Good-by," she said, extending her hand to Mme. Cinizelli. "I feel very grateful to

you for all your motherly care. Should good fortune ever come to me, I will write to you."

The tears stood in the good woman's eyes. She pressed Rosa's hand. "Don't you mind Cinizelli," she said, "he will come round in time, but he is out of his head now. I have often seen him thus; but, never fear, you will not find him unjust or mean. I know him well; he fires up as if he was going to scorch somebody; but leave him alone, presently he cools again. Don't mind his hasty words."

"Good-by," said Rosa, and quietly closed the door. She felt more wretched and lonely than ever now. She had broken with the only true friends she had ever had, and was adrift once more in the wide world. She hurried on, she knew not whither. There was a wild, bitter feeling gnawing at her heart—a sense of universal wrong. What harm had she done that the world should deal so hardly with her? She had tried honestly and patiently to do her best, and met with nothing but harshness and contempt. No human being cared whether she lived or died. Life was hateful to her. Why not end it? She need not fear to die, for she had done nobody any wrong. Death seemed to offer such sweet rest to her. Her business on this earth was to amuse those who could pay for amusement; but they owed no reciprocal duties to her. She had made money for her old patron, and he had petted her; when she ceased, he turned against her and spoke brutal words. And so it would be always. People would condescend to take what she had to give, but, when sick or in trouble, she could give no more, they would toss her aside with scorn. Yes, it had been a savage world to her.

Was she never to avenge herself? From time to time that craving, that fierce hunger of vengeance, rose dominant in Rosa's mind—a blind longing to retaliate on some one—on every one—the wrongs she had herself endured. And while she would nurse the desire, her religious faith seemed dead or dormant within her.

Poor Rosa's religious training, indeed, had been far from thorough. Her mother had told her little of God, but possessed enough Italian vanity and superstition to have her child confirmed. On that occasion, as the custom was, Rosa had been dressed in white, a white veil shrouding her face, little boots of white satin on her feet, a big bouquet of white roses in her hand, and, thus attired, been promenaded through the principal streets of her native town, looking like a small handmaid of the Virgin, or a miniature bride of the Church. Fortunately Rosa had found in her confessor a wise and faithful priest. He had listened tenderly to the story that fell from her young lips, and taught her, for the first time, to lift up her soul to the Great Father. He had told her that God loves most dearly those whom he chastens most. It was not for her to ask his reasons, but bow the head and accept his will. His words had fallen like gentle rain upon her heart, already hardened by sorrow. Something of their wholesome fragrance lingered still, only at times she forgot them, or flung them aside, almost with hatred. So she did now, feeling that all on earth was dark—injustice everywhere, wrong everywhere—and that she must right herself.

She walked swiftly along, careless whither, and quite forgetting that her foot was still far from strong. Turning a corner into Madison Square, she came suddenly

on a group of persons, whom, lifting her eyes, she recognized. It was Mr. Phillips and Mary, with Mr. and Mrs. Elliot. The ladies stared at her intently. Mr. Elliot touched his hat, but Mr. Phillips took no notice of her. A blind, mad rage seized Rosa and o'ermastered her native delicacy. She walked up to Miss Marlboro, and raising her veil said, hurriedly:

"Pardon me. The gentleman who is with you is not a fit companion for any lady."

Mary scanned her in blank astonishment, while Mr. Phillips twirled his moustache. Cecilia and Henry had stopped, and heard every word. Rosa went on recklessly:

"If you were poor and defenseless, this man would long ago have insulted you. You owe it to your position and wealth alone that he has not yet done so." She shot at Mr. Phillips a glance of loathing and scorn. "Dare you say it is not true?"

He did not answer. Nobody spoke. Rosa passed on.

She had scarcely gone a step, when her anger began to cool. With amazement and horror, she recalled what she had done. Her rage had whirled her forward like a delirium—and to what sad lengths. The few words she had uttered seemed to ring in her remorseful ears. She would have given worlds to unsay them; for now, alas! she had lost ground in her own esteem. She longed to be at home once more in her little room, where she might think over what she had done, unvexed by the noises of the street. She beckoned to an omnibus, got in, and was soon at her house again.

The movement of the stage had afforded some distraction to her thoughts, and now the quiet of her small

chamber struck upon her with severe pain. The words she had said to Mr. Phillips took shape before her mental vision and wrote themselves on the wall. Had she been crazy in that unlucky moment? Certainly she had hurt herself far more than she had hurt him. She sat down and pressed her fevered head against the cool mantelpiece.

"I always felt till now," she said, giving utterance to her thoughts, "a sort of pride in myself. I was glad to be what I was; it was a sort of silent revenge; the consciousness in my own soul that I was not the low thing they thought me; that the poor circus girl had burning within her a love of the beautiful and true; and that before heaven that recognizes no distinction of birth, I stood quite as high as those who looked down on me. It is different now; I have become what I seemed—a mean, degraded creature. Just when I had thrown off my former self, I seem to have become least worthy of better things. What shall I do? I cannot write and ask his pardon—I despise him too much for that—but if I knew where the young lady lived, I would go to her and acknowledge how sorry I am. She has a kind face. She might forgive me."

The persons whom Rosa had so much startled remained motionless for some moments, eyeing one another in speechless surprise. Mr. Phillips seemed stupefied, but presently stammered out some excuse for taking his leave. The ladies bowed coldly and walked home without a word.

CHAPTER IX.



ARDLY had Mrs. Elliot, with her husband and sister, reached home, when Mary left the married pair together, and Cecilia began, with a gleam of triumph in her eyes:

“Well, what do you think of Miss Thornton now?”

“I think,” said Henry, “that she showed a splendid spirit; just what I should have expected from her.”

“Henry, you surely are not in earnest?”

“Indeed, I am. She served Phillips right; and if there were more of her fearless dignity in your sex—or if you would take one another’s part when you see it exerted—you would be nobler beings than you now are, and more worthy of love.”

“It is cruel, Henry, by way of defending one woman, to assail the rest.”

“Well, I ask your pardon; perhaps it was not civil. It was true, however, and truth should be some excuse for incivility.”

“No, it is no excuse. What would you say if another woman had been so bold, so brazen, as to stop strangers in the street and taunt each with his secret faults in the others’ presence?”

“I should call it the best moral barometer in the world, warning every one where to expect deceit, falsehood, and treachery, and thereby enabling them to guard against evil influences.”

"You know you only say that because you are resolved to take that girl's part; or because you seek to torment me."

"No; neither one nor the other. I spoke from an honest love of the truth."

"I am tired of this eternal truth," and Cecilia's voice trembled. "You know, Henry, it was atrocious impertinence in that girl. Suppose, for instance—suppose Mary had been engaged to Mr. Phillips, a thousand suspicions would have been awakened, and might have ended in making her wretched for life."

"But, my dear child, do you not see? In the case you suppose, this plain truth, which you detest so much—"

"I do not detest it!" said Cecilia, reddening.

"This plain truth," continued Henry, with a mischievous expression in his eyes, which his wife did not care to meet, "would have prevented all that misery."

"No, I see it would have caused it."

"Pardon me; not at all; because, were he not, in fact, the man Mary had supposed him, she must have been, sooner or later, disillusionized; and how much better to discover her mistake before marriage than afterward."

"I do not see why Mary should have a special intervention of Providence on her behalf. Other people have to take their chances, and the consequences of their acts. I am sure if most of us knew beforehand all the defects of those we propose to live with, we should change our minds fast enough."

"Well, you are coming round to my views."

"Not at all, Henry."

"Yes, you are. It is because of its tendency to pre-

vent these misunderstandings and life-long miseries that the act of heroism we witnessed this morning should be encouraged and admired."

"She is a bold, bad girl."

"She is a noble creature! Here is a young, innocent, unprotected girl defending her own honor and the dignity of her sex against a low-minded libertine, while you, secured from scathe or wrong by some casual advantage of birth or station—you stand aloof, and cry shame on her! You ought to stretch forth your arms to her; shield and comfort, and call her sister. But you, forsooth, are too high-born for that; or rather, you are too deeply imbued with foreign prejudices to be true to your womanhood and your country."

"It is false! You might say that to Mary—not to me. You know well that I never had any foreign ideas!"

"It is true," said Henry, coldly, "that you pride yourself on your Puritanism."

Cecilia burst into tears. "This is too much! You blame me for one thing one moment, and the next instant for the opposite. Ever since that hateful girl appeared, you have been a different man. How do you know Mr. Phillips is the low-minded libertine you call him? If he is, you ought never to have countenanced his schemes. You dishonored yourself by doing it."

"You may be sure that girl had some good reason for the bitterness she showed toward him; and for my own part, certainly, I shall not continue his acquaintance."

"You call that justice!" said Cecilia, "to forsake an old friend for the light words of a girl you do not know."

"Pardon me! I do know her, though, I regret to say, but slightly."

"Regret! You might have spared me that!"

"Why so? How can we help missing those who might have an ennobling influence on our lives? I shall most certainly be at great pains, henceforward, to cultivate this acquaintance. It may yet ripen into friendship."

Henry said this, partly to tease Cecilia, partly from a reckless temper, that often placed him in an aggressive attitude toward conventional formulas and creeds.

"Then you mean to go and see her?"

"Why should I not?"

"Because—because," said Cecilia—and the young wife trembled from head to foot—"because, as I reminded you once before, you promised solemnly at the altar, leaving all others, to cleave unto me; but you recognize none of the laws that control humanity."

"I bow to none that are inhuman, but I obey the law of truth."

"Truth! truth! Must I always hear of it, and never see it acted on?" exclaimed Cecilia. "Are no other laws binding?—those of humanity—of mercy? It seems to me you confound everything. Are no lines to be drawn anywhere? Where distinctions exist, you must make account of them. You know the framework of society does exist; that there are classes, and, of necessity, some difference between high and low."

"Why, of necessity?"

"Because, otherwise, my coachman would be sitting at my table, and there would be no respect of persons."

"Nor should there be. Has not America proclaimed all persons free and equal?"

“At least,” said poor Cecilia, made half frantic by opposition, “there should be some respect paid to goodness and education.”

“If you shut off the ignorant from all access to the educated and good, how are they to rise to better things?”

“Oh, you love to argue for argument’s sake—but I hate it! Henry, dearest!”—she went to him, and put her arms about his neck—“promise me this one thing! Promise me not to go there,—not to see her! It would make me so wretched!”

“Why would it make you wretched?”

“Don’t ask me, dear, to argue it all over again! You know you owe it to me not to go! I entreat you, dear Henry,” and she clasped her hands, “you’ll not go, will you?”

“I will promise nothing. Good-by!”

Cecilia said no more, and Henry left her. He had talked himself into believing it right and proper to do whatever he chose, and go where he chose. If this girl had good in her, she must needs exert a good influence upon all who came within her sphere. He admired her beauty, and her spirit, and saw no harm in saying so. He felt vexed with Cecilia for her want of sympathy, and in a hard, cold mood wandered up town toward the house where Rosa lived. He had never gone there, save on that one night when he with his friends had accompanied Rosa from Delmonico’s to her house. He walked on, hardening his heart, until he reached her street. Then suddenly rose before him Cecilia’s pale face, wet with tears;—was it not his duty to make her happy? What right had he to throw himself or lead another in the way of temptation? Were not love and truth in-

mates of his own home, if he would but look there for them? As he was nearing Rosa's door these thoughts made him pause. Again he moved forward with a laugh at his own prudery: he paused again. What had he to do with her? Was he not a married man? Was he in conscience seeking her friendship only, in order to level false social barriers, and place all classes on a footing of equality? If it were really so, why did he not go forth and preach his doctrine to less attractive material? He stood still on the sidewalk, put one foot on the step, then turned his face and walked resolutely down the street. Had Cecilia known this, she would have ceased weeping, knelt down, and prayed heaven to bless him she loved; but Henry was too independent and too proud to let her know what he had withstood, and what proof he had given of his affection for her.

CHAPTER X.



POOR Rosa, meanwhile, was left to her own resources, and very slender they were. Her ready money was nearly exhausted, and Monsieur Cinizelli's passion apparently had not yet cooled; at least, she had heard nothing from him since that memorable afternoon. He was still in her debt for four months' pay, but Rosa could not stoop to appeal to him. She had heard nothing of her offer to sell poor Bruno, and had not ventured, since the day of her accident, to visit the circus. She wondered whether any one took care of her darling now, and whether they used him in the ring; she never would forgive Monsieur Cinizelli if he sanctioned that; Bruno was still her horse! How was she to find a purchaser for him? Should she advertise,—or what steps ought she to take? She knew nothing of such things! If only Mr. Livingstone would call,—he, perhaps, would help her. He was not proud, like the rest,—and she did not fear him, somehow,—but he would never come; what possible claim had she on his time or thoughts? She looked over her little wardrobe, and began to reckon what she had that was salable, and might supply her present needs.

On one thing her mind was fixed,—to leave America as soon as possible. She would stay no longer where

there was nothing more for her to do. She longed, moreover, for a breath of Italian air; there was nobody in Italy whom she loved, it was true,—but it seemed sometimes that if she could only feel the sea breeze on her cheek, could hear the familiar music of her mother-tongue, and gather flowers, as she used, from her native soil, she would be happy and light-hearted once more! Yes, she would go now, while her heart was free! The thought called the color to her face—Free! it should always be free, yet Rosa had a prophetic sense of what she might one day feel, and shrank from it as from a pain she would willingly be spared.

She went to her bureau, and scanned her treasures. What could she count on to help her in these straits? There lay a few jewels, souvenirs of benefit nights in London and Paris, a diamond ring, which she had never worn, some earrings of turquoise, less becoming to her dark beauty,—a bouquet holder of silver, set with garnets and other stones, and other graceful, but useless, toys. They were the guerdons of her little triumphs, hoarded as such till now; “But I will sell them to-day!” she said, and then reddened at the thought of threading the streets to peddle her small wares. “Let them go, I hate them! If I might only part as easily with myself, be lost in the great crowd, and forget that I had ever lived! Who will wear these, I wonder? Some one, I hope, less unhappy than I! This diamond, perhaps, may be bought for an engagement ring one day, and the fair young owner will little dream whose it was.”

Rosa dressed, and taking her jewel-boxes, sallied forth in quest of a purchaser. She went first to a large jeweler’s shop in the centre of the city, but paused before the great

doors, for she who had been the cynosure of a thousand eyes, wanted courage for her present purpose. She entered; a tall personage, with elaborately-trimmed whiskers, stepped forward and bowed low. She threw back her veil with a haughty air. "I have a diamond ring," she said, "and other jewels which I wish to dispose of! May I see somebody for that purpose?"

"To exchange?"

"No, to sell!"

The man smiled civilly, "We don't do that sort of business here!" Rosa's heart sank, she turned to go, but not before she had seen the usher wink at a fellow-clerk behind a counter, as if to say, "I've sent her off. You know what she wants!" She was ready to faint with mortification, but managed to walk out with a firm step, resolving to try some less elegant establishment. A few blocks on the north was another well-known jeweler. Rosa shivered as she drew near the shop, but went in, and addressing in a low voice one of the salesmen, "I have," she said, "a ring that I should like to sell!"

He leaned forward obsequiously, "What did you say, madam?"

"I said I had a ring I should be glad to sell!"

"We do not buy single rings!" was the gruff reply, emphasized by a lifting of the eyebrows and a glance toward the door that hinted plainly, "Do not let me detain you!" Rosa looked him straight in the face—for she would not seem to understand the insult—and walked slowly away.

Her progress so far was not encouraging, but she must try once more, for she remembered how much she

needed money. She recalled with bitterness of soul, as she moved on, how people had censured her for earning her bread honestly, and now that she had forsaken her calling, not a hand was stretched forth to help her. She might die of starvation—who would care?

Three doors further on Broadway was another goldsmith. Ah, how she detested her errand, but she entered, lifted her veil, produced her ring-box, and said, timidly, "Would you kindly tell me the value of this ring?"

The man took it up, examined it with a magnifying-glass, and finally, handing it back to Rosa, opined that it was worth about one hundred and fifty dollars.

"Would you give me that sum for it?" said Rosa.

The man screwed up his eyes at this; scrutinized the ring with the semblance of extreme severity, and after a judicious silence, "Now I look at it," said he, "I see I overestimated it just now. The central diamond, you perceive, has a flaw in it."

"Would you please tell me," said Rosa, "what you would give for it?"

"Well, it is not a first-class ring; these stones that form the cluster are not true brilliants, they are only rose-diamonds; we might not sell this article again for a year, and if it lies in the store, we lose the interest, you see!"

"Yes," said poor Rosa, "that is quite true, but what, then, is it worth?"

"Well, I will inquire!" He disappeared, and Rosa saw him in close colloquy with another personage at the rear of the store. He returned presently, and announced that he could let her have fifty dollars for the ring.

"That is very little, if it is worth a hundred and fifty!"

“Well, you see the gold mounting is out of date, and useless to us. Nobody would buy diamonds set in that fashion.”

Rosa did not see it, but she needed money sorely, and so consented to take fifty dollars. She produced next her turquoise earrings. These also were stones of considerable value, and the jeweler glanced at her somewhat doubtfully, but her frank eyes met his, and disarmed suspicion.

Poor Rosa! When the trinkets had been sent to her, the price-ticket, by accident or from design, had remained attached to them. It bore the mark, five hundred francs; and now he said, “twenty-five dollars!” She told him that she knew what the earrings cost—“Yes, but that,” he said, “was a long time ago!”

“Only last winter,” she replied.

“Oh, very well, if you can find a more liberal dealer, pray do so!”

“Ah, no,” she said, piteously, “I will accept the sum you offer!” The man went to his safe, and fumbling about, drew forth a bundle of bank-notes. “How rich he must be!” thought Rosa, “and he will enrich himself further now with my poor jewels.” He counted a roll twice over—it contained seventy-three dollars. He handed them to her; “Wait a moment,” he said, “and I will fetch you the remainder!”

While she was waiting, a lady entered whom Rosa instantly recognized as the person who had Mr. Phillips’ arm during the *rencontre* in Madison Square. Rosa colored to the roots of her hair and turned away; Mary smiled, and—another clerk coming forward—said to him, in tones that struck sweetly on Rosa’s heart, “I have

brought this pin to be mended; the diamond in the centre has dropped out once already; happily, however, it occurred in my own room. Pray have it secured carefully; such a piece of good fortune will scarcely happen twice."

"I will see it well fastened, miss! You may rely on it!"

"Thanks! Pray do it very carefully!"

"Here," said the other salesman, handing Rosa her two dollars, "here is what remains of the price agreed on!"

Rosa turned to go, but looked wistfully at Mary. Mary returned the glance with a look of encouragement. Rosa stopped and advanced toward her; "I hope," she said, but her voice was scarcely audible, "you will not think I take too great a liberty in addressing you, but I have so longed to meet you. Had I known where you lived, I should have ventured to write you a line. Believe me, I have suffered keenly from remorse, for an outburst of what must have seemed to you, and indeed was, inexcusable anger."

Mary looked at her, but did not speak, yet there was in her eyes such profound interest, so much genuine sympathy, that Rosa was emboldened to continue.

"I hope that you will forget it all, and that, if you ever condescend to think of the poor girl you have sometimes applauded, your memory may not connect her with a scene of which she is heartily ashamed."

So great was Mary's amazement at Rosa's gentle manner, and the pure English which she spoke, only tinged as it were by the faintest foreign accent, so natural and lively was the interest awakened by a life so wholly

different from her own, that for the first few minutes she listened in silence, but now she said :

“Do not suppose I blame you. I admire your courage, and shall always be grateful to you for speaking as you did. It is a shameful thing for men to dare enter the society of ladies, when their private lives are utterly unworthy of them. I wish all girls were as brave as you !”

“But, I fear,” said Rosa, “that I did not speak from any good motive, but urged on by rage, and a blind longing for revenge !”

“No matter what the motive was, it was a righteous act. The cause was ample, and the effect was good. Mr. Phillips, perhaps you know, sailed for Europe two days afterward. He had not intended to go so early by a month or two !”

“No, I did not know it,” replied Rosa, meeting her look with clear, frank eyes. “Good-by ! I suppose I shall never see you again ! But I am glad I spoke to you !”

“I heard of your accident,” said Mary, “and will call on you soon. You seem quite well again. It was very fortunate the sprain was not more serious.”

“I shall never ride again.”

“Oh, was it so serious, then ?” said Mary. “It cannot be so bad as that !”

“No, the sprain was nothing, but I have said farewell to my circus life. Good-by !”

Mary put out her hand :

“Will you not come and see me ?” she said, “you are lonely, perhaps,—I have heard my brother, Mr. Elliot, speak of meeting you. It would give me pleasure to see you at our house—here is my card !”

"I shall come with much pleasure," said Rosa, her face lighting, and Mary owned to herself that her new acquaintance looked bewitching at that moment.

"You will be sure to come, then?"

"Yes; I have had too few pleasures to forego so great a one as this will be to me. Good-by!"

"Good-by," said Mary, on reaching the door. Rosa turned away; but Mary stood watching her till she was lost in the throng. Then, her mind full of their meeting, she, too, returned home. "What would Mr. Livingstone think," she pondered, "if he knew I had so far conquered my prejudices as not merely to talk with this girl, but positively invite her to come and see me? And what would my fine acquaintances say? They would consider me mad—or lost!"

"Whom do you think I met to-day?" she began, when she sat down to dinner with Henry and Cecilia.

"Mrs. Brandon, doubtless!" said Henry. "I saw her sailing up Fifth Avenue in all her splendor!"

"No, indeed! I should not think her worth mentioning!"

"She would regard you simply as a mad-woman, if she heard you;—a fit subject for bedlam!"

"But guess!" she persisted. "I give you three trials!"

"Man—or woman?"

"Neither."

"Flesh, or fish?" demanded Henry.

"Flesh, sir!—and of the loveliest!"

"Well, Mrs. Sinclair! She is the handsomest woman I know in society!"

"Oh, Henry," exclaimed Cecilia, deprecatingly; "she has no soul in her face."

"That is not essential to beauty ; no one, my dear, not even the most advanced scientists of our day, place the soul in the face. The brain and the heart, I believe, dispute it, and epicureans assign it to the stomach. So far as I know, those are the only parts of the body which claim the honor."

"But it was no woman," said Mary, "so you have failed again !"

"Perhaps it was Randolph's little boy, the finest little fellow I've seen in many a day ; he was brought round to the club the other evening ; his impudence was delightful !"

"No ; three guesses and you are out."

"I blush to confess that I burn with curiosity," said Henry.

"Well, it was,—Miss Rosa Thornton !"

"I hope not," exclaimed Cecilia, with a severe look ; "why should you speak to her ?"

"But I did speak to her—in fact, talked with her a long time. She is charming ; and I asked her to come and see me."

"Here ?" gasped Cecilia.

"I have no other place to receive her in !"

"I am afraid she will contaminate the house," mused Henry, with a grave face.

"You are very satirical !" cried Cecilia, in indignant tones ; "I do not think a circus-girl a proper person for my sister to be seen with, or to be invited to my house !"

"She is no longer a circus-girl," said Mary. "She told me she should never ride again ; I wondered how the poor girl meant to earn her living, but of course I did not like to ask."

"Why not?" said Henry; "creatures that follow so low a calling are not susceptible of feeling!"

"That is not fair!" said Mary; "if I have erred, and am now eager to correct my mistake; you surely ought not to pelt me with stones. Really, Henry seems to grudge another's reaching the shore of truth where he stands himself, and thrusts us back breathless, to struggle again in the waves of error."

"Your metaphor is lame! There exists no firm shore for the honest truth-seeker—only heights that still rise as he nears them!"

"You make a grievous thing of life, when you admit no rest!" said Cecilia; "I thought the pleasure of seeking was fruition, and the meed of toil, repose."

"No; what you call rest is stagnation; but you misuse the word—you confound rest with repose."

"What is the difference?" said Cecilia.

"Why, rest is a temporary relaxation from labor, the healthful slumber of your faculties before a fresh and resolute start, but repose is a mere sluggishness, the death of one's powers past all awakening."

"You are nice in your distinctions! Is she coming here, Mary?"

"Yes; she said it would give her pleasure to come. The girl looks and speaks like a well-bred lady, and she's as pretty as one well could be!"

"And why may she not be a lady?" asked Henry.

"Because," returned Mary, beginning to share her sister's indignation, "it is very natural not to expect such qualities in such a quarter; very few conventional ladies are true ladies, and that a girl, who never had the advantage of education or good society, should be one,

is surprising, to say the least. But she has the right air, nobody could deny it, and since I confess so much you need not quarrel with me. By the way, I met her at a jeweler's."

"At a jeweler's?" said Cecilia. "What could she be doing there?"

"I do not know."

"I hope," said Henry, "she was purchasing the finest diamonds in the shop."

"Poor little thing!" said Mary. "I fear she has not the means to do that! At any rate, I took the greatest fancy to her, and were I a man I should fall in love with her"—the blood rushed crimson to Cecilia's brow—"I wonder," continued Mary, "when she will come; I should regret being out!"

"And so should I," said Henry.

"I never," exclaimed Mary, "heard anything so absurd in my life! Just as if her visit, sir, was meant partly for you!"

"You may be sure I shall take at least half of it to myself."

"I shall bolt the door, and not let you in!"

"We shall see," said Henry, rising from the table—*"la femme propose, mais l'homme dispose!"*

"I think," said Cecilia, when she and Mary were again alone, "I do think it was cruel to say so much before Henry in praise of that girl! You know very well how I feel about her, but you are all in league to make me miserable!"

"You know, dear Cecilia, that I would not wound you for the world; but be reasonable—tell me, are we living in a desert island? and if not, how may any of us

escape comparison with other women? We must all, I fancy, stand or fall on our own merits, and conquer by virtue of positive attractions,—not by the absence of rival charms. Why, then, sister dear, be sweet, indulgent, gentle; yield everything but your self-respect, and be sure that your husband from a moment's attention to others, will turn back with joy to you! There will always be in the world some one who is prettier, or more graceful, or cleverer than we. If this is to make us unhappy, our lives will be wretched, indeed! But life and love were meant to be blessings, not trials. The fact is, Cecilia, you must rely on the whole sum of your attractions, good looks, breeding, character, temperament—all combined—and not on any one of them; and to make yourself worthy of another's faith, first of all believe in yourself."

"I feel that what you say is true, and—and you are very kind to me, Mary, but you cannot possibly understand what it is to give your heart utterly to one man, or you would not think it so easy to act by rule."

"I do not imagine it easy, but I try to remember that a jealous and exacting disposition will not make it a whit easier. Many a woman doubtless has lost the affection her husband had for her by demanding too much from it. No heart can be pried and burst open, but all hearts yield kindly to the pressure of a sensitive, loving tact."

"You seem to know a great deal!"

"I am a year older than you," returned Mary, smiling.

CHAPTER XI.

LATE in the afternoon a few days after the conversation recited in our last chapter, came a timid ring at Mrs. Elliot's door, and a young girl was ushered into the drawing-room. Cecilia was standing near the window, watching for Henry. She turned when the door opened, recognized Rosa, and bowed haughtily.

"Do you wish to see my sister, Miss Marlboro?" she said.

"I have sent up my card; I hope she is in." At this moment Mary entered.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you. How fortunate I am! I have just returned from a long shopping excursion, Cecilia, I scarcely need introduce Miss Thornton—Miss Thornton, this is my sister!"

"I have seen Mrs. Elliot before," said Rosa, smiling; "I used to see every one during my performances; I mean every one who was worth seeing."

"Have you gone shopping again since I met you?" inquired Mary.

"No, I have not, and you very much flatter my errand of the other day by giving it another name. I was trying to dispose of a ring and some little trinkets that had been sent me anonymously. I needed the money more than the jewels."

"I hope it was not the beautiful ring you wore the first night I saw you."

"No," said Rosa, drawing off her glove; "I could never part with that! You see I wear it always! Its story is the only incident of my life whose public version hits the truth. It was presented to me by Queen Victoria. I was asked one afternoon to exhibit my horse before the Court. After I had run through my little *répertoire*, the Queen called me to her, and taking this ring from her finger, placed it in my hand. And then Prince Arthur came up and patted Bruno. I've a theory," she said, laughing, "that this ring has done wonders for me. No, it was another diamond that I sold."

"Did the jeweler deal fairly with you?"

"Oh, I had a painful experience! It was the first time I ever tried to get money in that way. I felt a sort of shame, and yet ashamed of being ashamed;—you remember those words of our Dante, 'one ought to fear only what will do harm to others.' I thought of them, and they gave me courage."

"Do you read Dante?" said Mary.

"Oh, yes; he is my countryman!"

"I never could like him, although I know it is audacious to confess so much to an Italian."

"I do not care much for him myself, except in the prettier parts, where he tells of Beatrice, of Pia dei Ptolemai, and of Francesca di Rimini."

"The last," said Mary, "is indeed a lovely portrait. Somebody—Leigh Hunt, I think—calls Francesca's story 'a lily growing by the mouth of Tartarus.' It is a pretty description!"

"So it is," said Rosa, eagerly, her face lighting with

a radiant smile ; “ Poor thing, she could not have suffered so fearfully in hell since she had Paolo with her ! To me, loneliness seems more dreadful than anything in the world.”

Cecilia drew near ; in spite of herself, she began to feel interested in this young girl. But lately she had been anxiously expecting Henry, now she listened for his step with apprehension, and prayed in her heart that he might not come.

“ For my part,” continued Mary, “ I think a great deal of pity has been wasted on Francesca. You, for instance, Cecilia, would think her fate perfect heaven—eternal union—without the possibility of escaping each from the other.”

“ But that very thing,” said Cecilia, “ would be sure to make Paolo detest her !”

“ Yes, that is what Henry would call an infringement of his freedom. And I suppose rigorous confinement to one another’s society left the pair dull enough in the end. Without the most active brains and most stimulating surroundings, how soon two people would exhaust most topics of common interest, and be driven, from mere *ennui*, to quarrel. I am afraid Dante, after all, knew human nature better than we—better even than Milton, perhaps. Henry would say it is because the Italian was more of a materialist, and never tells us of the mind being ‘ its own place,’ making ‘ a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven,’ but paints physical torture eating in upon the soul, instead of a racked conscience working a woe unknown to the flesh.”

“ I do not agree with Milton, at all,” exclaimed Cecilia ; “ no one can be utterly independent of circumstances ”—

she was interrupted in the middle of her words, by the turning of a key in the outer door. Presently she heard Henry's step in the hall. She hoped he would pass the drawing-room and go up stairs, as he was wont at that hour to prepare for dinner. But no, he stopped, and seeing his wife and her sister, came into the room.

"Where have I been, Cecilia? Guess"—he paused—"I beg pardon, I did not know you had company."

"My brother, Mr. Elliot—Miss Thornton!"

"I am delighted to meet you again; you were seated with your back to the light, so that I did not recognize you at first." Rosa bowed, but did not rise. He came across the room and shook hands with her. "What a beautiful day we have had! You did well to take advantage of the fine weather."

"We were engaged," said Mary, "in discourse far more profound than you would suspect us women of."

"Concerning dress?" said Henry. "That is commonly the theme of your dialectics."

"For shame! Miss Thornton will think you cynical! We were comparing Dante with Milton. Miss Thornton does not believe that circumstances can miss exerting some weight in molding character."

"No, indeed," said Rosa, "I do not. I went yesterday to visit a 'ragged school' for Italian boys. It was heart-breaking to see their little faces pinched and drawn with privations and resignation. They had lost their parents, and what should have been a second mother to them, their native land—and how could they be expected to grow up good and happy boys, with no home to shelter, no friend to care for them."

"What people call home influences," said Henry,

"have commonly rather a weakening effect on children. I doubt, indeed, if love be an essential element in a man's life. It seems to relax the muscles of his mind, and sap his moral energy."

"That is perfectly ridiculous," cried Mary, "what a hideous monster you would make of man—all sinew, no flesh!"

"I did not mean precisely no flesh, only no soft, no flabby flesh!"

"Miss Thornton, he is positively absurd. Do you often visit those poor friendless children?"

"Were I going to stay here, I should go often. They are not well supplied with teachers, and it is a pleasure to teach them."

"Our ladies," said Henry, "have no leisure for that sort of thing. Social duties engross them, and open a far higher vocation than the imparting of ideas, morals and education to ragged boys, who are only destined to become our fellow-citizens, our politicians, and, very likely, our governors."

"A great many ladies in New York," said Mary, "devote their lives to public charities. You give Miss Thornton an erroneous impression of our countrywomen."

"It is late," said Rosa, rising, "I hope I have not stayed too long!"

"By no means!—Pray do not go!"

"I believe I must!"

"Shall we soon see you again?"

"I leave New York almost immediately for Europe. I have secured my passage in the *Westphalia*, which sails next Saturday."

"Do you like music?" inquired Mary.

"Dearly!"

"I wish, then, you would come and pass Thursday evening with us; I am to give a little musical entertainment."

"You are too kind," said Rosa, "but"—she hesitated.

"Do not refuse me! It will be a very informal affair; only with your Italian ear, you will need to be very indulgent to the music."

"I thank you. I will come. Good-morning!" and this time, Rosa, on taking leave, put out her hand.

"Good-by! Remember, Thursday evening!"

"I shall not forget it; good-by!" She turned to Cecilia. "Good-by!" she said, looking up at her with a winning smile.

Cecilia bent her head coldly, but Mr. Elliot attended Rosa to the door, and taking up his hat, asked leave to escort her home.

"Oh, no! Please do not!"

"It is too late for you to walk back alone!"

"I am not afraid. I was very thoughtless to call at so late an hour; but indeed, I am not afraid!"

"Yes, but others fear for you; I must insist on attending you."

"He has positively gone," cried Cecilia, looking out through the curtains; "he has gone with her, Mary!"

"Well, dear, it would scarcely be gentlemanlike to let her go home alone at this hour. It is too dark for such a pretty girl to be in the streets unprotected."

"I believe she came at that time on purpose to meet Henry!" Cecilia said, bursting into tears; "and you have asked her here on Thursday. I never heard of such

a thing; what will people think? You would disgrace yourself, Mary, even by patronizing a girl who is utterly unworthy; but how could you be so mad as to ask her to this house? What right had you to place such a person on a footing of equality with us? Do not expect me at your party! I would not meet her again for anything in the world. Look how you drive me away from you for the sake of that vulgar girl!"

"Indeed, Cecilia, I did not mean to affront you. I acted thoughtlessly—on the impulse of a moment. But I felt sorry for the poor girl's loneliness. She looked so brave as she stood there, and yet too young to buffet with the rude world."

"You might have gone to see her at her lodgings! You need not have invited her here! The story will go all over New York."

"I care little for that," said Mary; "but I do mind giving you pain!"

"No, you don't! You give me pain, as you would give me a tonic, to strengthen me; but it will do me no good. I hate her, and I shall end with hating Henry and you, and everybody."

"Now, dear Cecilia, do dry your eyes! Henry will soon be here, for you know Miss Thornton does not live far away, and it will lower you terribly in his esteem if he finds you weeping because he took her home."

"I care not what he sees!"

"But you risk the loss of your power over him by this course."

"I have none to lose!" answered Cecilia, bitterly.

"Yes, you have great power! You are quite as pretty as Miss Thornton, only in a different way!"

"No, I am not," said Cecilia, wiping her eyes; "I am not half so interesting, so winning; do you suppose I do not see it?"

"A moment ago," said Mary, laughing, "you called her vulgar!"

"I do not care what I say! I am almost mad with pain. Oh, Mary, comfort me! Tell me I am not grown ugly since my marriage!"

"No, dearest, I think your face has a great deal more beauty in it than before. It shows deeper feeling, and a finer sensibility."

"Henry hates sensibility!"

"No, he likes it united to good sense."

"Alas! I shall never hit the *juste milieu*!"

"Who does? But do, dear Cecilia, for heaven's sake, dry your tears!"

While his wife and sister were holding this colloquy, Mr. Elliot was attending Rosa to her humble lodgings.

"Are those ladies sisters?" inquired Rosa.

"Yes."

"One of them is prettier than the other; the older of the two—I think you called her Mary—is rather fine-looking than pretty; and you, then, are their brother?"

Henry winced, stammered a moment, and answered, "Yes." How could he, he asked himself, while a charming girl showed so kindly an interest in him, obtrude upon her the fact that he was a husband?

"What is the younger lady's name?"

Deception, though polite, is often embarrassing, but Henry persisted, and answered, "Cecilia."

"She is proud—is she not—far prouder than her sister? Which do you love the best?"

Henry winced again. His position was growing untenable; however, he must go on. "Cecilia!" was his reply.

"But why do you like her better than her sister? Pride is not a virtue."

"Don't you approve of pride? It is the great conservative quality, and has its noble aspects."

"That depends, I think, on the kind; there are many varieties," said Rosa; "I can't think pride of position, birth or wealth either noble or great."

"What kind of pride, then, do you like?"

"A pride that respects oneself, independent of outward things. But I am not sure that pride of any kind is admirable; it is so apt to be cruel and hard."

"Tell me, Miss Thornton, are not you proud?"

"Yes, and I am often hard and cruel!"

"You! I should as soon believe it, were a pet lamb to plead guilty of such an offense."

Rosa laughed. "This is the second time, since I came to America, that I have been compared to a lamb. I have sometimes tried to be lamb-like, but I doubt if I should have been altogether pleased to succeed."

"How strange a confession; lambs are the most self-sacrificing, the most feminine creatures in the world. Even the hard-hearted, jealous Juno softened to them. Did you never read Lessing's fable, how, on a festal day, when all the beasts of the earth brought gifts to the Queen of Heaven, the little lamb stood apart, disconsolate. It had been lately shorn, and, having nothing to give, not even its fleece, was fain, at length, to offer itself as a sacrifice. Juno scented the sweet savor, and asked what was burning on her altar. They told her that the

poor lamb had given itself for a burnt offering. Then Juno, for the first time, shed a tear, that all Jupiter's wrongs had never wrung from her."

"I shall remember your pretty story," said Rosa, "but it hardly increases one's desire to become a lamb unless one could become that identical one!"

"That is scarcely fair. Suppose that animals should argue that they would not become men unless they could be either Cæsars or Shakspeares!"

"No; because in being changed into animals, it is natural that we should select some one distinguished for its noble traits, whereas every animal aggrandizes itself in becoming a man."

"Do you know," continued Mr. Elliot, "that I have met with the loftiest traits of character quite as often in animals as in men? Such traits, I mean, as courage, gratitude, generosity, fidelity."

Rosa would have heartily confirmed his experience, had she known of her companion's falsehood. As it was, she made no reply.

"You said you were soon to sail for Europe?"

"Yes, I shall be on the ocean before many days. I am going home to my native land!"

"Is there nothing you leave with regret?"

Rosa colored. "Oh, yes!" she said, "but it is well to go while there is something which I can regret to leave."

"And the regrets that will be felt for you, do you not care for those?"

"I shall doubt their existence," returned Rosa, quickly.

"Have you no faith, then, in American affection?"

"Just as much as I have in any other."

"You confess that Americans have as good hearts as Italians?"

"Better, perhaps," said Rosa, "but not so swift to feel, nor so intense in their feelings!"

"Why better, then?"

"They may be truer. Would not that make them better?"

"I am not sure. That depends on your preference for quantity or quality in affection!"

"I prefer quality," said Rosa.

"And I quantity," declared Henry, laughing. "Here we are at your door; I only wish our walk had been longer. You will certainly accept my sister's invitation for Thursday. I hope you will allow me the pleasure of taking you home on that occasion."

"You are all so kind to me," said Rosa, "that you will compel me to regret America after all. 'The last drop in the cup,' they say, 'is sweetest;' the sun is loveliest when he sets; and so it seems to be with places at the parting hour."

"Yes," said Henry, "and with persons; we never analyze and rank them fairly till they are gone: the best men living somewhere disappoint us, and we see their virtues, as it were, in solution. But let death or separation precipitate these, and we recognize the perfect crystals. Do you not appreciate your friends more highly, now that you are taking leave of them?"


"I do not know. Good-by! Thank you for your escort."

"Not at all; I am grateful for the privilege. Good-by!"

The first person Henry saw on returning was Cecilia,

and he could not fail to mark the traces of tears on her cheeks. Dinner was already served, and they sat down. The young wife struggled earnestly to seem natural and unconstrained during the repast, but in vain. She was reserved and cold. Now Henry's conscience had already smitten him, and he felt a fresh sting in the silent reproach of his wife's manner. But what right, suggested his rebellious spirit—what right had she, not knowing how culpable he was, to put on that martyr air? Moreover, what right had any woman to look dismal and black, to be forever weeping, and parading a broken heart? If they would but be cheerful and joyous, men could not help loving them, as they love the sunlight; but when they rob life of its gayety and brightness, to leave it dreary, barren, and bleak, they make themselves but the odious figures of their own gloomy landscape.

CHAPTER XII.

HE few intervening days were uneventful, and now Thursday had arrived, when Mary's musical party was to come off. Mary was herself an admirable musician, and often had informal *soirées*, which were, as she had told Rosa, almost exclusively devoted to music. *Her* evenings she called them, because Cecilia cared little for such entertainments.

Mary had gone to her room to prepare for the evening, and Cecilia sat alone in her bed-chamber, when Henry entered.

"What!" he exclaimed; "not dressed yet?" Cecilia was reclining in a *chaise longue*, still in the gown she wore at dinner, her cheeks flaming, her eyes strangely bright.

"How pretty you are!" her husband said, looking at her with tender admiration. "How well that indolent pose becomes you! But do you know how late it is? I have heard the door-bell ring already."

"It is Miss Thornton, I suppose," said Cecilia, the red spots on her cheeks growing deeper.

"Make haste, then, Cecilia, to go down and receive her!"

"I shall not go down to the drawing-room this evening!"

"Not go down! Are you not well?" He came over

to where she sat, took his wife's hand in his, held it for a moment, then pressed it to his lips. "Why," he said, kindly, "what is the matter, Cecilia? Have you got a fever?"

"Why should you care if I had?" she said, withdrawing her hand.

"I should grieve with all my heart! But pray, dear, dress yourself! Be a good girl, and come down with me! It is really very late."

"Do not let me detain you. I have told you I shall not go down stairs this evening!"

"Then you must certainly be ill!"

"I am perfectly well, thank you; but I do not care for society of a sort I am not accustomed to."

"Do you find such among your sister's friends?"

"Yes, to-night!"

"Don't be absurd, Cecilia; you are making yourself ridiculous."

"It is not I, but Mary and you who do that."

"Well, you are indeed proud, as Miss Thornton said; but it is of a piece with your conduct of the other day. How could you condescend to avail yourself of superior wealth and position, in order to make a poor little girl uncomfortable—to humiliate your sister's guest! Is that your good breeding?"

"Did she call me proud, and to you? It is the first time," she cried, bitterly, "I ever heard of a husband's listening to, and positively quoting offensive remarks about his wife."

"If," said Henry, "you think the words derogatory, why justify them in act?"

"I shall do precisely what I choose!"

"Then, my dear, you will simply rank yourself with certain monsters of self-will who disfigure the pages of history. You will become a sort of female Caligula or Commodus—a second Catherine de Medici, or some such charmer."

"I do not care whom I resemble. I only wish my history, like theirs, were closed."

"That wish is certain to be gratified one day! Well, I cannot wait for you much longer."

"I did not dream you were waiting for me. I presumed you were delayed with your own toilet. I shall not come!"

"Good evening, then!"

"Good evening, Henry."

He had gone, and left Cecilia to pace the room alone. She went restlessly to the door, and looking over the balusters, saw Rosa Thornton come up the stairs and pass into the reception room. She went back into her room, and threw herself on the sofa. "How I hate that girl," she said, and started to her feet again with a feeling of wild rage. "I believe I could almost kill her." Presently there came a knock at the door.

"Who is it?"

"'Tis I, Cecilia!" and Mary entered. "Do come down stairs! Henry says you are obdurate; but please, dearest, not to make me unhappy, and spoil my evening, and Henry's as well."

"Henry unhappy!"

"Yes, you know he will be, and you absent yourself on purpose to cloud his enjoyment. Be magnanimous. Do come down."

"No, I will not! I cannot! I feel ill and miserable!"

Go back to your guests! But I thank you for coming to me. I am not angry with you."

"I am so sorry, dear Cecilia! I entreat you not to make yourself unhappy. Believe me, you have no cause." Mary stooped, and would have kissed her sister, but Cecilia turned away her head, and Mary, with another look of kindly sympathy, closed the door.

Rosa Thornton's appearance in Mary's drawing-room created an unusual sensation, and indeed, no contrast could well be greater than that between the new-comer and the ladies present. She was attired in a plain gown of black silk, finished at the throat with a linen collar. Her hair was rolled back simply in large dark coils about her shapely head. She wore no ornament whatever. Mary, the moment she saw her, went forward and greeted her cordially: "I am delighted to see you; I have thought of you so often since you were last here."

"And I of you," said Rosa.

"In heaven's name!" whispered a lady at the further end of the room, as she lifted her eye-glass, "who is that person—look—whom Miss Marlboro is talking with? She resembles, in the most extraordinary way—but no, I am not insane; it cannot be!"

"I feel quite confident of my own sanity," said Mr. Livingstone, who stood beside the last speaker, "and I am equally certain that the young lady is the very person you take her for."

"I will not believe it! Miss Marlboro could not so far forget herself."

"As to remember another kindly, do you mean?" returned Mr. Livingstone. "To me, on the contrary, that seems just like Miss Marlboro."

"It is not possible!" exclaimed Mrs. Brandon, "It is not possible that Miss Marlboro has so far ignored all she owes to the great moving panorama of society, as to ask the Signorina Rosa to her house!"

"It is just because the panorama moves, that our hostess has had the good sense to invite the person you speak of," returned Mr. Livingstone.

"Miss Marlboro's taste, at any rate," rejoined Mrs. Brandon, "seems, in this case, very questionable."

"I consider," said the lady who had first spoken, "I consider her conduct quite unpardonable; if Miss Marlboro wished for the society of such a person, she was at liberty to enjoy it; but she owed us the choice of refusing or consenting to meet her new acquaintance."

"I think I will ask for an introduction to the young lady in question," said Mr. Livingstone, bowing, and leaving them.

"Is he, too, demented? Here, my dear, you see the social correlative of communism!"

"The glass of fashion," cried Mrs. Brandon, "has actually gone over to speak to her."

Mr. Livingstone had crossed the room, and after the interchange of a few merry words, moved, with Mary, to where Rosa sat, quite apart from the rest of the company. Mr. Elliot had already observed that she was alone, but could not free himself, as he was paying his *devoirs* to another person. Rosa blushed when she saw Mary and Mr. Livingstone approach, and slightly averted her head.

"Miss Thornton, permit me to present Mr. Livingstone!"

"I have already the pleasure of knowing Mr Livingstone," she said.

"Indeed!" said Mary, arching her brows (had she forgotten, or did she choose to ignore, the supper at Delmonico's?) "Since you are also acquainted with my brother, you will scarcely feel yourself a stranger here. Pray excuse me, I must go and attend to other guests."

"Mr. Livingstone," Rosa began, when Mary had left them, "I have longed to see you to say how grateful I am for your kindness in finding me a purchaser for Bruno. I owe you more than I can utter, more than you will ever know," she continued, raising her eyes to his face. "It is everything to me. You have bestowed on me my freedom and a future! The day will come, I hope," she added, "when you may hear such things of Rosa Thornton as will make you glad to have once befriended her!"

"I shall always be glad, whether I hear of you or not," he said earnestly, "to have been the instrument—even in the most indirect way—of serving you. I hope it is not indiscreet on my part to ask where that future may lie?"

"I do not know. It is still indistinct, even to my own eyes."

"In that case, I admit, it would hardly be visible to another."

"Is Miss Marlboro about to sing?" said Rosa.

"Yes, and she sings delightfully."

Mary had taken her seat at the piano, and gave a little German song with taste and feeling. Rosa turned to Mr. Livingstone—

"How sweet her voice is!—so sympathetic, it goes straight to the heart."

"Do you sing?" inquired Mr. Livingstone.

"Everybody sings after a fashion in my country. You

know the old saying that we Italians are born with musical boxes in our throats. My own voice has never been cultivated, but I do not think it has volume enough to make me regret its want of training."

"Italy is, indeed, a musical land; and, in keeping with all the rest, you have the sweetest singing-bird in the world—that we know only in poetry—the nightingale!"

"Did you ever see one?"

"Never."

"I had one, once. He was such a darling—in his russet coat, and with an eye so human in its expression that it almost startled you to meet it. He knew me well, and when I told him to sing he seemed really to load the air with song."

"Such a bird might have won you to believe in the transmigration of souls!"

"I am not sure that I know precisely what that means," she answered.

"In the metempsychosis!" said Mr. Livingstone, smiling.

Rosa looked more puzzled than ever.

"I mean the superstitious notion, or tenet, that the soul after death, leaving its human dwelling, passes into some animal or bird; and again, after a long interval, returns to its primitive form; so that it never really dies, but wanders forever from one habitation to another."

"Remembering," asked Rosa, "in its present abode to whom or what it has previously belonged?"

"No," he said, "there we are left in the dark."

Rosa shuddered. "What a fearful doctrine!"

"Why does it strike you as so terrible? It involves at least the assurance that your soul does not die."

"But it does die to me!" rejoined Rosa, "if I pass into the body of a nightingale, and forget utterly my human life. If that former existence has left not a trace on the memory, might it not as well be annihilated?"

"Perhaps it is rather a freezing creed," said Mr. Livingstone. "It might tend, I suppose, to make one reckless of the future; but it need not do so; and, after all, that doctrine of Pythagoras may involve the highest lessons. Suppose, for instance, we lead self-denying lives—as many Christians avow they do—merely to secure a splendid prize, like eternal life, we certainly receive more than we have earned—we are embezzlers, so to speak, of immortality! Our aim, it seems to me, would be far purer if we did high and noble deeds, with no hope of reward or recognition, merely to keep our own self-respect; and because we should loathe ourselves if—but they are preparing to give us some more music; we must postpone our metaphysics a few moments."

Mary played a duet with an Italian gentleman. Rosa, when they had finished, glanced at her companion, and he asked if she had liked it.

"Not very much. I cannot enjoy the piano; I always feel as if music were forced out of it against its will; while, with some other musical instruments, sweet sounds seem native to them, and flow forth gladly at a touch. But the truth is, I did not listen very attentively."

"I might say as much," said Mr. Livingstone.

"I was thinking," said Rosa, "of our conversation, and trying to follow your train of thought."

"And what conclusion did you reach?"

"Shall I tell you frankly?"

"Yes, I love frankness."

"I thought you were mistaken in what you said, and that it is better to do right for God's sake than for our own!"

"You are right!" and he looked at her attentively. "If it is quite certain that we do it for God's sake, and not with an eye to God's bounty, you are right."

Mr. Elliot was standing near them, and joined them at this moment.

"Did you like my sister's singing?" he said.

"Very much! I was just saying to Mr. Livingstone that her voice has a sympathetic quality which ranks with us as the highest merit."

"She learned to sing in your country."

"Did she? Then Miss Marlboro has been in Italy?"

"Oh, yes! Mary is something of an artist. She means to visit Italy again very soon. Mary's temperament is rather what we men call Bohemian!"

"What is that?" said Rosa.

"Well, naturally independent—unlike most of your sex—of man's protection. She can take care of herself."

"I presume," said Rosa, smiling, "that, under your definition, I, too, am somewhat of a Bohemian?"

"No, I should not say you were."

"Where is your other sister to-night?"

Mr. Elliot reddened slightly as he replied:

"You mean Cecilia? She was not well enough to come down this evening. Excuse me for a moment; I must go and speak to that young lady yonder who is standing quite alone."

Mr. Elliot hastened away on his charitable errand, while Rosa, turning to Mr. Livingstone, remarked that the other sister was the prettier—"But, as I told Mr.

Elliot, I like Miss Mary better; she has a charming face."

"The other sister! You mean his wife," said Mr. Livingstone.

"His wife! I did not know he was married. Which is she? Pray point her out!"

"His wife is the lady you took for a sister—whom you called the prettier—although I, too, prefer Miss Mary's face."

"Do you mean that she he calls Cecilia is his wife?" said Rosa, opening her eyes and staring fixedly at Mr. Livingstone.

"Yes; Cecilia is Mrs. Elliot!"

Rosa bit her lip and turned her head, but her companion could see the blood tinge her throat and cheek. Could it be, he asked himself, that she felt a preference for Elliot? She could not have seen enough of him for that. But would Elliot convey a false impression—pretend that Cecilia was his sister? He had listened to the conversation that had passed between them, and noticed a trace of confusion in Elliot's manner.

Mary was singing again. It was a little ballad which Mr. Livingstone particularly liked and always asked for. She glanced across at him now, and smiled amid her singing.

"How pretty that is," said Rosa; "her voice grows upon one strangely. She has, indeed, many gifts."

"Yes; Miss Marlboro is one of the most charming persons I ever met."

"She looks so truly good, too!" said Rosa.

"And she is what she looks! She is coming toward us, with the young Italian who joined her in the duet."

"Is he an Italian? He does not look it."

"In one way or another, 'the look,' as you call it, wears off in America."

"I suppose we bleach here!" said Rosa, laughing.

"Physically or morally?"

"In both ways, perhaps!"

"Miss Thornton, I may not have a chance to speak to you again. May I escort you home this evening?"

"I thank you, but Mr. Elliot has already proffered his services. I would have much preferred to accept yours, believe me!"

"I have brought you," said Mary, joining them, "one of your own countrymen, Signor Bosceti."

Mary glanced at Mr. Livingstone—"Will you come with me?"

"With pleasure! Do your ears burn?" he said, as they moved away.

"No; why should they? Red ears are very plebeian, and, though an American—"

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes, a true American; but I have, I presume, refined tastes!"

"Which, of course, would not suffer your ears to burn?"

"I hope not," she said.

"Well, your cheeks might flush at any rate, for Miss Thornton and I have been saying most charming things about you!"

"Thank you," said Mary, "compliments are so rarely sincere that I prefer them to be made anywhere rather than to my face."

"Pardon me, you are wrong; to your face no lie could

ever be uttered, while many an untruth might pass current behind your back."

"That sounds like 'Save me from my friends, and I will deal with my enemies!'"

"Not at all! I meant it in a very different sense. Your face is so frank and true that no man would dare confront it with a falsehood!"

Mary looked up at him and smiled. Not far from where they were standing at this moment was Mr. Elliot, engaged in conversation with Mrs. Brandon.

"Yes," that lady was saying, "I hope she may marry well. You know it is a common romance in Italy—some noble linking his splendid name to beauty which he has discovered in humble guise! It may be Cinderella's story over again!"

"You women always make a romance of marriage," said Henry, "while we men incline to think that the wedding day ushers in the prose of life. Who is it—Rochefoucauld?—says that marriage is the tomb of love? For my own part, I hold death and marriage to be the rival doomsmen of mankind; only death has this to recommend him, that while he can free us from marriage, marriage, unluckily, cannot insure us against death."

Mary had overheard what Mr. Elliot said, and, interrupting him—"Henry," she said, "will you kindly see if supper is nearly ready?" Henry moved away to execute her orders, and Mary, dropping Mr. Livingstone's arm, followed him to the hall.

"Henry," she began, when they were out of earshot—there was anger now in Mary's eyes—"it is unfeeling and uncivil to speak as you do. I have always taken

your side against Cecilia, but I must say you have no right to make such remarks. They are discourteous to my sister, who is not here to defend herself."

"A woman never understands a jest," said Henry.

"Some things, Henry, ought never to be matter for jests—some jests ought not to be understood." Mary said this gravely; then, leaving her brother, returned to Mr. Livingstone.

"You looked vexed," he said.

"I was; the ices had not come."

"*Was?* Is your anger cooled, then?"

"Yes, with their arrival!"

"I see a movement toward supper, May I offer my arm?"

"I want my fan," said Mary; "it is on the table."

Mr. Livingstone brought it to her, smiling—"Here is your mystic engine—

"Which coolness gives the matchless dame,
To every other breast a flame."

"That might be apropos if I could handle it like a Spanish woman. I dare say our little Italian friend could wield it with a charm that would justify your quotation. How attractive she is! But how sad is her position! I pity her from the bottom of my soul. Do you know I feel a sort of sisterly responsibility that positively weighs upon me whenever I look at her? If I were independent—quite alone in the world—she should share my home."

There was genuine admiration in her companion's eyes as he answered: "It would be just like you! You are always generous!"

"There is nothing generous in what I said just now.

I am not fond of the world ; on the contrary, I often find myself hating it, and wonder why I continue to live in it. Look, for instance, at those horrid people yonder—my pretended friends, too ! They are all huddled together at one end of the room, lest their nobility should come in contact with that poor little girl. I feel in such a rage that I am longing to speak my mind to them, and if this were not my own house I would. I was so glad to see you devoting yourself to her. Your attentions created no end of excitement, and did the witnesses a great deal of good. Suppose we start a social crusade, Mr. Livingstone—stitch crosses on our breasts, unfurl the banner of fraternity, and fight for the true faith !”

“I would gladly associate myself with you in any undertaking ; I should need, I fear, no common armor—but a double-proof mail that would preserve me from friends no less than foes.”

Mary blushed. “We would both wear armor of that kind,” she said. “See, they are returning to the drawing-room. Is it so late ?”

“On the contrary, it seems to me very early.”

“Are you going ?” said Mary to Rosa, who had approached to take leave.

“Yes ; I have to thank you for a delightful evening. Will you kindly ask your brother if he is ready to take me home ? I am very sorry to trouble him.”

“It will be a pleasure. I will go and tell him.”

“When do you sail, Miss Thornton ?” said Mr. Livingstone, when Mary had left them.

“On Saturday.”

“So soon ?”

"Yes, and I am glad it is so soon!" She spoke quickly, and the face which she turned to her companion was very pale.

"Will you regret America?"

"I hope that I shall have nothing to regret. But I shall not forget your or Miss Marlboro's kindness."

Mr. Livingstone did not trust himself to speak. Mary had returned to them.

"My brother will be with you in a moment. Let me go with you to the reception-room."

Rosa put out her hand to Mr. Livingstone: "Good-night and good-by!"

"Good-night; I hope to see you again." Rosa's hand lay in his for a moment, but he did not venture to press it.

Something seemed to rise in the young girl's throat, and she turned away.

"I shall not forget you!" whispered Mary, as they moved toward the reception-room.

The tears stood in Rosa's eyes; "Nor I you!" she answered.

"Let me help you with your cloak! I dare say I shall meet you one day in Italy. Indeed, I feel quite sure of it. God bless you!" and Mary kissed her. "To us Americans, your Italian distances seem trifling, and we can hardly fail to meet if I go there!"

"I shall know when you come," said Rosa; "I shall feel something drawing at my heart-strings, and I will never rest until I find you!"

"Here is my brother come to claim you. Once more, good-by, and God bless you!"

Rosa pressed her hand in silence, for she could not

speak. Mr. Elliot opened the door for her, and in a moment more it closed, and divided her from the few friends she possessed in the world.

"Take my arm," said Mr. Elliot.

"No, thank you!" was the cold reply; and they came down the steps and moved away, not unseen, however, by poor Cecilia, who, with straining eyes, peered after their retreating forms.

"There they go!" she murmured. "He offered her his arm, but she did not take it. Why not? Oh, I wish they would go quickly and that he were at home again! He did not come up once in the whole evening to see how I was!" She turned impatiently from the window, and began once more to pace the floor.

Meanwhile Rosa and her escort proceeded on their way.

"Take my arm," said Henry; "I must insist upon it; the night is dark, and you may stumble at any moment."

"There is no danger of that; I can see perfectly well."

"Did you enjoy the evening? It made me very unhappy not to be able to talk to you. Livingstone engrossed you most unfairly."

"I had a delightful evening!"

"Had you? Let me hope it did not come from Livingstone's attentions."

Rosa blushed, and made no answer.

"I will tell you why," continued Henry, "if you will promise me that the thing shall go no further. It is whispered that Livingstone has already several wives; that in fact, under the disguise of a vestryman in Charity Church, he is propagating the doctrines of Brigham Young. And for a girl so artless, charming, and good as yourself—"

"I do not believe what you say," replied Rosa. "I think you are a bad, wicked man."

"Why," said Henry, "what crime have I committed, except that of wishing you well?"

"I do not thank you for your good wishes! I would as lief you wished me ill!"

"Between persons of opposite sexes, it is apt to amount to the same thing," said Henry.

"Mr. Elliot," asked Rosa, abruptly, "why did you tell me the other day that both of those ladies whom I met at your house were your sisters? Only one is your sister, and she only by marriage; the prettier and prouder of the two is your wife. Why did you deny it?"

Mr. Elliot made no answer, and she went on, her lips quivering: "It was a mean, low, dishonorable act!"

"Did Livingstone tell you she was my wife?" said Henry. "It was a cruel breach of confidence."

"No matter who told me, it was the truth! And how dare you call yourself a gentleman, when you can take such a lie upon your lips? How dare you look your poor wife in the face? I pity her!"

"There is one kind of pity, Miss Thornton," said Henry, "which I should not disdain to have you feel for myself. Mrs. Elliot does not need your pity."

"She needs it sorely, and the pity of every woman who knows you as you are! I would rather a thousand times remain a humble, ignorant girl—an outcast from society—than lose all the wealth and position in the world and be wife of yours!"

"And I, believe me, Miss Thornton, would rather have all the wealth in the world than have you an outcast," replied Henry.

"I do not fear your satire," said Rosa, "you know I am right. Go, Mr. Elliot, kneel down, and ask Heaven to forgive the wrong you did your wife! She had a proud look, I thought. Poor thing! she had need of pride. But I spoke rashly; I knew not then what her husband was! Peter, in sore trial and peril of life, denied his Master, but the man who, without shadow of cause, could deny his wife, is far baser, wickeder than he!"

"Your indignation," said Henry, "does you credit, and increases that admiration which caused, and, may I hope, excuses my concealment. Will you not forgive me?"

"No. You must ask forgiveness of your own conscience!"

"The very last person in the world," said Henry, "whom I should wish to appeal to. I prefer to plead my cause even before you. I entreat you not to be vindictive."

"What does it matter to you what I think or feel? I am only a poor circus girl!"

"You are all that a queen can be," said Henry, "a true woman; but like all your class, Miss Thornton, you are cruel. Why did not a just Heaven make beauty kind, and homely women alone cruel? I should so have ordered it."

"Why did not Heaven make clever men good, and stupid men alone bad?" replied Rosa. "Good-night, Mr. Elliot. Thank you for escorting me home."

"Good-night," said Henry, and lingered a moment. "Miss Thornton," he said, "you do not think me your friend. Well, praise from an enemy should be doubly

sweet. I have, at least, this one merit, that I judge my fellows as they are. You are going abroad to follow a career. Your face, Miss Rosa, has in it the promise of greatness. In any career, I know that you will win success and fame. Many years later you will learn this truth, that the only persons, good or bad, whom we love, are those who appreciate us before the world; those who foretell the flower in the bud. I wish you good speed."

Rosa was touched. "Farewell, Mr. Elliot," she said. "I wish you whatever it is best you should find. Believe me, goodness is the only thing that repays us with any happiness. That is the only return I can make for your encouragement. Good-night."

Henry had accompanied her to her door, which she had opened with a pass-key, and now closed behind her. He turned away—he was angry with himself. He knew Rosa had done well to rebuke him, and had, indeed, been stung to the quick. In a ruffled mood he walked swiftly home. There, at the window, was Cecilia, watching for his return.

"Thank God, he has come back so soon!" she murmured, clasping her hands and withdrawing hastily from the window, lest he should enter and find her there. He was already on the stairs.

"Still up?" he said, as, opening the door, he discovered Cecilia. "It is very late; why don't you retire?"

"I waited to say good-night, Henry!"

"What nonsense! We are not children!"

"Henry, dear, I feel so ill!"

"Of course you do, after sitting here in the cold the whole evening!"

"But I am not cold, dear, I am very hot!"

"Well, there is nothing marvelous in that! You persist in taking cold, and that brings on a fever. Why don't you go to bed?"

"I will, if you will say good-night kindly."


"Good-night!"

"Oh, Henry, my heart is breaking! Why, why do you treat me so freezingly? Are you in love with this Rosa Thornton?"

"I should not put it so strongly as that," replied Henry, and passed into his own room.

Poor Cecilia flung herself down on her bed and sobbed aloud.

CHAPTER XIII.

NLY two days remained for Rosa in New York, and they were sad, lonely days. She received a short, but affectionate note from Mrs. Cini-zelli, enclosing four months' salary. Her husband, she told her, was still too angry to see her, but would no longer refuse her her due. This addition to her small fortune was of no slight importance to Rosa, for she did not wish to touch the money paid for Bruno until she reached home. The price of the horse which she had fostered so tenderly and surrendered so regretfully had been sent to her in gold—a round sum of twenty-five thousand francs—and she would try to carry the whole of this to Italy. She little dreamed to whom, by virtue of this purchase, her darling Bruno belonged.

And now she was to bid farewell to her former life. With hands clasped over her knees, she sat and thought over all that had befallen her from her childhood's days; of her life in that home which had been so little home-like; of her later career; of her strange relations with Mary Marlboro and the Elliots, and of Mr. Livingstone—the blood rushed to her brow as she recalled the first time those large, dark eyes had rested on her face; she had felt at that moment as if an electric cord bound her to him, who had been till then a stranger; something seemed to whisper, "You and I are linked by no com-

mon tie." And yet he had never spoken one flattering word, had never called her beautiful, but had merely looked his pity for her loneliness.

She was glad, she told herself, that he had not come again to see her. He had so much, no doubt, to engage his attention—so many real ladies to visit—that he had naturally forgotten her. In her heart, however, she did not believe this. She knew that they were divided by birth and position, and that it was best they should meet no more; but she would have been so light-hearted, she thought, if she could have seen him once again—just to look into his eyes and say, "Thank you for all you have said and done!" But he did not come. Rosa would not leave the house once in those last two days. Every time the front door at the foot of the stairs opened she started, and her heart fluttered; but no!—no one asked for her.

Saturday morning had come. Rosa was awake early. As she watched the sun's rays gild her windows, she remembered that when he set that evening she would be rocked to sleep by the waves. Yes, the hour was fast approaching when her life in New York and all its memories would sink into the dreamy past.

The express agent, who was to convey her trunk to the boat, appeared betimes. Rosa put on her bonnet, took in her hand her little bag, gave a last look at her little room, and went down stairs.

"Good-by, Mary!" she said to the Irish servant-maid, slipping some money into her hand.

"Good-by, miss! and sure it's meself is the grateful woman for your ginerosity! Good luck to ye!"

This was the only farewell she had to make, and she

felt a choking sensation in her throat as she remembered that no one else in that great city cared when or where she went. She walked forth quietly, glanced with tearful eyes up and down the familiar streets, hailed an omnibus, and presently the din of Broadway blended with sad reflections in her brain. She pulled the string at Barclay street, and was about to leave the stage, when the driver shouted through the window that she had forgotten to pay her fare. Rosa smiled and handed up the money, which she had been holding unconsciously in her hand, got out and soon reached the pier from which the French steamer was to sail.

"Baggage, miss?" shouted a stevedore.

"Take care of that rope," cried another.

"Got any baggage? Where's your ticket?" said one of the porters. "That's all right; forward, follow that 'ere gentleman!"

Rosa looked earnestly for the person who should answer this description, and finding none, followed a man who was hoisting her trunk upon his shoulders, and was assisted by a uniformed official to cross the plank.

"First class?" he asked.

"No," said Rosa, timidly, "second class!"

A steward came forward: "Step this way, miss! What is your number?"

"One hundred and one!"

"Follow me, miss! Trunks to go in the hold, I suppose!"

"Yes, the large one, but my small trunk can be put under my berth."

She was shown into a little inside state-room. It had

no window; what air entered it was admitted through the door, which opened into a dark passage. How desolate it looked! Rosa shuddered as she glanced at the bed, which, with its white spread glimmering faintly in the dim light, resembled a coffin, she thought, wrapped in a winding-sheet. She placed her bag at the foot of the berth, and had her small trunk put under it; then, because the close air between decks half stifled her, she hurried up the companion-way.

On deck every one was hustling one another; there was tugging of ropes, wheeling of luggage, sailors shouting, people scrambling on and off. There were gay, young girls, beautifully dressed, each of them surrounded by a group of friends. None but Rosa stood entirely alone. She glanced at her watch —twelve already! and at one they were to start. And now, as the hour drew on, the leave-takings grew warmer and tenderer. One young girl leaned her head on the shoulder of an elderly gentleman, apparently her father, and sobbed passionately. Others were chattering at the tops of their lungs, as if they meant to impress ineffaceably their last injunctions.

The only one among them all to whom Rosa's heart went forth, was the poor weeping girl. Rosa asked herself if, by-and-by, she might not be of some comfort to her; but she remembered, with a sigh, the line drawn across the deck, which would separate them, no doubt, after the vessel got to sea; for she as a second-class passenger, was not to cross that line.

Turning away from the movement and uproar, she leaned over the bulwarks, and watched the green water eddy and gurgle against the ship's side. Her face was

bent down, and her mind dwelling mournfully on the slender plank which alone connected her with America, when suddenly some one touched her arm. It was the faintest, most delicate touch in the world, but it startled her, and brought the color to her cheek. Her face lighted with a happy smile when she saw Mr. Livingstone standing by her side. Instinctively she put out her hand, and her breath came fast as she said:

“I was feeling so lonely, so sad! Every one else seemed to have so many friends to wish them God speed, and I had none. How good it was, how kind, how like yourself to come and see me off! For my part, I can never say that the Americans are cold. They have been anything but that to me—at least, some of them. But how did you remember the day? I supposed, of course, you had forgotten it utterly, and that I should never see you again!” She was pouring forth her whole heart in one breath—she was so glad to see a familiar face, so glad to be rescued from her loneliness.

He smiled gravely as she looked up into his face. He had some tea-roses in his hand.

“I brought these for you—will you have them?” he said. “They will keep their scent fresh for a day or two, and your friends, I hope, fresh in your memory as well! I must confess my birth in frigid America, but how could you dream I should forget your sailing-day? I went first to your lodgings, and, finding you had just gone, started for the ship, but the coachman drove me to the wrong pier. I never so berated a poor wretch in my life, and at last sprang on the box and seized the reins myself. I would never have forgiven him or myself either if we had arrived too late!”

"Oh!" cried Rosa, clapping her hands, "I am so delighted you came! Do not leave me, Mr. Livingstone, before the whistle sounds! Do you think you will ever come to Europe?"

"Ever is a long time!"

"Not so long as never!" rejoined Rosa, sadly.

"What is your destination when you come to land?"

"Genoa!"

"Yes, but that is far, very far, from Havre! Have you no fear of traveling alone?"

"It is certainly not agreeable; but what am I to do?"

"I know of one who would gladly act as your courier—I mean the faithful George, who, by the way, has got on admirably in my office."

"I wish I could express, Mr. Livingstone, half the gratitude I feel for your great kindness to him!"

"On the contrary, I am really indebted to you for an honest and efficient servant."

"If you come to Europe, you will bring him, will you not?"

"To be sure I shall! He has become my servant—my Sancho Panza—my shadow! He would have been here to-day, but I purposely concealed from the poor fellow the date of your departure. I knew the knowledge would leave him half heart-broken."

"Tell him," said Rosa, "that I did not forget him in these last few moments!"

"Have you brought anything to read? How could I be so careless as to overlook books?"

"I have all I want—my Shakspeare!"

"You will find written there," he said, looking down into the young girl's eyes,

‘Parting is such sweet sorrow,
That I shall say—good-night, till it be morrow.’

What is that noise?”

“They are blowing off steam; but do not leave me yet!” she said, imploringly.

“I promise not to leave you until the plank is actually lifted—will that do? Take my arm; let me find you a pleasant standing place, where, if you choose, you can wave me a last adieu! Look, I will be on that bulkhead yonder. Do you see it?”

“Oh, that is the whistle!” cried Rosa, trembling, and clinging to his arm. “I should like to send my love to Miss Marlboro, if she would not think me too bold. Might I?”

“I am sure she will be glad to receive so sweet a farewell!”

“See,” said Rosa, “what a rush they are making for the plank! They will part us soon! The ocean is a fearful divider!”

“Yes,” he answered; “after Death, the worst! A ruthless enemy, is he not, to fling himself between two friends, and cut their lives asunder?”

“The whistle again!” cried Rosa; “how the sound goes through one! Oh, they are hurrying off!”

“All ashore, all ashore!” rang through the vessel. The steam roared louder than ever, and the shrieks of mate and boatswain rose high above the murmured “God bless you” and “Farewell,” which lingered on the lips of friends. And now everybody had gone, yet Mr. Livingstone remained by Rosa’s side, and her arm was still in his.

“Give me a rose!” he said.

She loosened one from her bouquet and gave it to him, without speaking. He looked at her intently; she was very pale, and would not lift her eyes to meet his own.

All at once the roar of the steam-pipes ceased. "I must go!" he said. He took her hand; she was still silent, but a tear rolled down her cheek. He stooped quickly and kissed it away—he was gone!

Rosa could not stir; presently she heard shouts of "Man still on board!" Her heart gave a great bound. "Look out! look out!" "He's safe!" cried another; "he has jumped ashore!" She hastened to the point which he had suggested, and, leaning over the rail, looked eagerly toward the pier. Yes, some one was climbing the bulkhead; it was he, and he was waving his handkerchief. Her head sank down on her hands, and the poor girl burst into tears. There was then some one, after all, who cared for Rosa. But every second was precious. She threw back her head, brushed away her tears, and answered his farewell. Presently a gun was fired, and in another moment a dense volume of smoke had rolled between them. When it cleared away, she could distinguish nothing. She was alone, with the memory of a kiss.

Mr. Livingstone waited until the hull of the ship had disappeared, and then drove to his office. All his surroundings seemed suddenly divested of any interest or charm. The picture of that fair young girl, as he had left her standing there on the ship's deck, still lived before his eyes. The face, so fraught with earnestness and feeling, was again upturned to his; he felt the touch of her soft arm, and now her eyes seemed to fly

his glance and fasten on the ground, while her long lashes swept her pale cheek.

But the memory of that kiss tormented him; he tried in vain to shake it off. How could he so forget himself? But she had seemed so much to need sympathy—and had looked so fair! It was a swift, mad impulse, for which he blamed himself bitterly now. Yes, he had wronged her—insulted her. He had done just that which he had scorned in another, taken advantage of her helpless position. If the girl cared for him, he had been ungenerous; if not, he had been brutal.

But Livingstone was a man, and, in the inextricable blending of human principles and passions, other feelings than remorse, perhaps, were at times uppermost in his mind. But for this one sweet memory Rosa would soon have seemed to him like a beautiful dream, which once, indeed, had shone on him, but now had vanished forever from his sight. That single kiss, by a magic of its own, brought her back to his fancy in all the charms and realities of life. Blame himself as he might for a thoughtless act, he could not altogether wish it undone.

CHAPTER XIV.



ON the day Rosa sailed Cecilia's jealousy had been wrought almost to a pitch of agony. Had Henry gone to see her off? That question cut into her heart. But it was a question she dared not put to him when, in the evening, he came home. She studied his face, but it was cold and hard, and quite inscrutable. She knew that if he had gone he would have argued himself by this time into the belief that he had done well, and from that belief neither Heaven nor earth would have power to shake him; and if he had not gone, he would think it beneath him to give her the satisfaction of learning it.

But Rosa had sailed; the ocean would soon roll between them; surely she need not be so jealous of her now. Alas! she would fain have had all mortal women, saving Cecilia Elliot, so ugly and so awkward that Henry could not, even in a spirit of perversity, see in them anything to admire.

And yet, in spite of her hostility to one whom she imagined a rival, Cecilia's gentler nature would assert itself at times, for there had been something in Rosa's appearance and circumstances which had touched her heart. Although she had treated her haughtily, and spoken of her harshly, she could not but acknowledge to her own conscience that the spectacle of that friendless

creature, steadfast and uncomplaining in the performance of an irksome and hateful task, might read herself a wholesome lesson.

Cecilia was too young when she married Henry to know anything of the annoyances, perplexities and difficulties which beset the path of life, no matter on what fortunate table-land of the social world that path may lie.

She had pictured to herself existence as a long day of unclouded sunshine. Henry loved her—that was enough! What trouble, what sorrow could come to her while he was by her side? And when death came, why they would die together in one another's arms, long before youth and joy should have succumbed to care and age.

Cecilia had yet to learn that the life of the happiest was, at best, a campaign—avoiding battles, perhaps, but compelling vigilance and activity; that Love's golden arrows, which glitter so bravely in the flush and heyday of courtship, soon grow tarnished and dull without the friction of daily solicitude, and an intelligent study to please; that her education in the largest sense—the discipline of mind and heart—was to begin in that very hour when she had fancied it concluded; that growth and progress, born of labor, were the true ends of woman's, not less than of man's life, and that these alone could insure one against bitterness and weariness of soul; for what was this *ennui* which her husband had began to evince in her society, which she sometimes experienced herself, but the creeping in of a vacuity and decay where fullness and vitality should have been.

These things she had yet to learn; but a glimmering

of them had begun to dawn on her wakeful, self-questioning heart. Heaven, it seemed, would never send her the gift she had longed and prayed for, and what, then, was she to do? How were the long days to be spent? That was the problem which haunted her day and night, and which, it was plain, must be resolved somehow.

The scheme of life she had followed hitherto must be abandoned. To sit idle for hours and watch for Henry's coming; to grow with every day more utterly dependent on his looks and moods; to feel perfectly wretched unless he were by her side—this would be not merely suicidal, but far worse, destructive of the very affection she coveted. She recognized that her demonstrative fondness, her exaggerated sensibility, often irritated and repelled her husband; he was fatigued in mind and body when he came up town from business, and naturally, until he obtained refreshment and repose, his mood was rather querulous than appreciative.

She knew all this, yet she found it hard to bear. Why, after all, should he betray his fatigue so willingly, and infect others with his peevish humors? Was this his stoicism, his manly fortitude? Why did he not pay court to her—kneel at her feet, and tell her how perfect she was, as he used in the old days? She had not changed, she was sure. And what source of fatigue had he which had not existed then? He had never talked of being tired, or looked it either, in their betrothal times. Perhaps he rallied more lightly then. But no, it was not fatigue; other men of his age were gay and active enough. They were glad enough to talk to her after toil as wearing as Henry's. Why had it not fallen to her lot to marry a man of equable temper, who

would be always the same—always affectionate and attentive? But, unluckily for Cecilia, although since her marriage she had come in close contact with all of Henry's faults, she was as much in love with him as ever.

Mary was, indeed, Cecilia's sister, but she had a natural love of justice, and had invariably taken Henry's side when she thought him in the right; but there had been times—for example, the evening when she overheard his conversation with Mrs. Brandon—when she deemed him much to blame, and spoke her mind quite plainly. Henry's speech concerning marriage had, of course, been repeated by Mrs. Brandon, and, after being extensively quoted as one of that clever, cynical Mr. Elliot's remarks, had come to poor Cecilia's ears.

"It was a heartless deed," she had told her husband, with tears in her eyes, "to satirize me in public, and put your notion of marriage into words that proclaimed to the world how thoroughly you detest it."

"I presume one may amuse himself in conversation."

"By no means, Henry! You owe it to the woman you have made your wife not to speak slightly of the relation you hold to her—not to throw out before indifferent people innuendoes against her who stands nearest you!"

"A little more than kin, and less than kind, perhaps!" said Henry, with an accent of merriment, which Cecilia never would recognize nor consent to share.

"You mean, I suppose, that I am fretful; I may be—I have reason to be so!"

"Well, my dear, it is fortunate that reason should once at least be made your guide!"

"If," said Cecilia, reddening, "if I did on a certain occasion lose my reason utterly, there is no insurmountable obstacle to my regaining it."

"You refer, I presume, my dear, to your falling in love with me?"

"You may well say 'fell in love,'" cried Cecilia, bitterly.

Henry laughed—"What a fall was there, my country-woman. You civilly hint what the play puts in good set terms, that, on that mournful occasion, 'you and I, and all of us, fell down!'"

"Now, Henry you shall not tease Cecilia!" said Mary, coming into the room, and to the rescue, at that moment.

"Was it right?" Mrs. Elliot appealed to her sister; "was it proper of Henry to declaim against marriage behind my back?"

"I must leave you," said Henry, "lest you repeat the offense before my face!" and he left the room.

"There, he is gone," exclaimed Cecilia, "he is too cruel!"

"You should never, dear Cecilia, appeal to a third person in your husband's presence; a man will not submit to that. You ought to settle your quarrels *tête-à-tête*!"

"Your husband," returned Mrs. Elliot, irritated, "will have a perfect wife! Knowing so well beforehand all a man's tastes and foibles, you will be sure not to give offense."

"I shall never have a husband," said Mary, coloring. "I am meant for an old maid."

"But frankly, Mary, do you suppose wives like their

husbands to sneer at marriage when they are not by to defend their own cause?"

Of course Mary understood the allusion, and, indeed, had expected that Henry's unfortunate speech would be repeated one day to his wife. She turned away her head, for in her heart she sided with her sister; but Mary was a prudent counselor, and, after a moment's reflection, said,

"Henry must have been exasperated at the time by your refusal to enter the drawing-room, the night of my party, and besides he flattered himself, no doubt, that he was saying something very pungent and clever. Men can never resist temptations of that kind; but I am sure he did not mean a word of it."

"The world thinks he did!"

"Why should you care for that? Can the world's opinion harm you? No injury is lasting but that we do ourselves through our own bad actions."

"I do not see that! Henry can hurt me, and does so!"

"Listen to me, Cecilia. You must find something to do, otherwise your feelings will prey on you until you become perfectly morbid! Don't you remember Auerbach's 'On the Heights'? How, when Irma was quite alone, bereft of hope, love, self-respect, of all earthly happiness, she traced these words in her diary: 'Why is it that no religion has enjoined, before all others, the commandment, 'Thou shalt work'? What a wholesome lesson; is it not? Whenever it recurs to me, it sends me forth with to my easel, and, if I have brains enough, may make an artist of me one day! Why, do you know, dear, if it were not for my art (yet think what a tyro I am in it!)

there are times when I feel wretched enough to fling myself out of that window!"

"You!" said Cecilia, "what nonsense!"

"Yes, I! and believe me, dear sister, if you could decipher the heart, you would behold unclouded happiness nowhere in this world!"

"Then," cried Cecilia, "everything is a lie!—sunshine, the birds, the childhood, maidenhood, laughter and love! What are we created for, if we are never to be happy?"

"Happiness implies contentment. We are not meant to rest contented with ourselves, but to gaze and climb upward—to live, think and feel on higher and higher planes. They who are wiser than we have reckoned it a great privilege to be able even to suffer deeply!"

"Oh, Mary! how can you find comfort in such words? You can never have known the heart-ache, or you could not talk so philosophically!"

"Perhaps not," said Mary, while a strange smile wandered over her lips. "Perhaps not! It is true, and trite enough, that every heart knoweth its own bitterness. Do you remember, dear, when we read Alfieri together, where he says that they are few, very few, in this world who are privileged to know what love really is—love in the completest sense, the genuine grand passion? It was mere egotism, perhaps, that made him fancy himself one of the elect; but I do believe the thought was just—that there are few and rare spirits who will consent to love greatly, utterly. As this world goes, such abnegation of self would prove not a blessing but a doom. Love of that sort is a religion—a religion whose apostles are also its martyrs!"

“What a fearful doctrine, Mary! I would rather dispense with love altogether than be doomed to ceaseless suffering!”

“Now, is that true? Would you give up your love for Henry, much as you are tortured by it?”

“Indeed I would; but, alas! I cannot.”

“You do not know yourself when you say this; you do not foresee the awful loneliness and vacuity that would prevail where love had been. In that hour of emptiness and despair you would cry, ‘Give me back my love, with all its pains and its terrors, with its sleepless anxiety and harrowing doubts! Give back to me that child of my heart, recusant, irresponsible, it is true, to my wishes and yearnings, but still the idol of an unwavering devotion, the torch of perpetual desire—my hero and my darling! the staff and star of my life! my anchor and my beacon!’”

“I would say, rather, ‘Welcome, peace! welcome, rest and tranquility! welcome, kindly oblivion!’”

“You are not candid, Cecilia! But I say again, find something to do. I shall never be satisfied until I see you seriously engaged in some active, genuine work, I care not what, so long as it is something you are fitted to do well.”

“I cannot make myself a painter or a sculptor; I have no taste for music, no skill in writing. I might make wax flowers, perhaps—what else? Of course there are other trades and callings which women are at liberty to follow; but I have been reared in a certain way; I cannot become a shop-woman, or go out to service, or keep a boarding-house, can I?”

“No, but you might teach children to read and write;

do you remember what Rosa Thornton told us of the little orphan school? Why not offer to teach there for an hour or two in the day? Nothing you could do would be more useful, and nothing would please Henry more."

Cecilia's face brightened. "Yes, I might, indeed, do that. I have thought of it a hundred times since she went away, but wanted courage to undertake it. But I will go to-morrow morning. I feel happier already at the thought."

The knowledge that she was about to do something for others—to emerge from her self-centred, self-torturing existence, gave a new light to Cecilia's face, and Henry's eyes dwelt on it that evening with a look she had not seen in them for many a day.

The next morning she awoke much excited at the prospect of her new life. She waited till Henry had left the house, then changed her gown, and prepared for her expedition. She had bound Mary not to say a word of her intention to Mr. Elliot, for her husband was naturally a skeptic, and, therefore, she meant to keep silence until she was sure of her resolution, and sure of effecting some positive results; then she would prove to him that she was no longer the idle thing he imagined her; that she, too, was doing her part in the world's labor; that she deserved, at least, a man's respect!

Mary walked with her as far as the school, but there she left her. After listening in vain for the studious hum which she had always associated with such places, Cecilia pushed open the door, and beheld some fifty pale-faced children ranged on long, hard wooden benches. They all seemed to be natives of Southern Europe, having dark

hair and large, lustrous eyes, which were at this moment fastened on Mrs. Elliot with lively interest. There were two teachers present—an emaciated young man of melancholy aspect, and a matter-of-fact looking girl, who seemed to be the executive officer, as she flourished a ferrule in her hand. The sight of those poor children, so languid, worn and hungry-eyed, without a trace of blithesomeness or mirth in look or gesture, went to Cecilia's heart. Yes, here was work to do. She saw it now, and felt that Rosa had been the instrument of a kind Providence when she had put it into her head to come.

"Art thou an Italian?" she said in his native tongue to a slender boy, who was gazing at her with rapt wonder. The child's face lighted all over—"Yes, lady! and you?"

"I am not an Italian," she continued, "but I can speak your language, and I have come here to teach you. Do you wish me to do so?"

"Do you love little boys?" and the child kept his eyes fastened on her face.

The boy's words touched her. This longing for affection, which, in her selfish blindness and folly, she had half believed peculiar to herself, seemed to be the first and uppermost desire of every human heart.

"Yes," she answered softly, "I am fond of little boys!" Thereupon a thin, small hand stole into hers, and there lay until it was quite warm. It was pleasant to her to feel the pressure of that little palm—timid suppliant for shelter and protection. At length she let it fall, and going up to the principal of the school, for such she took the man to be, told him that she had heard from a young Italian lady that they needed assistance, and that she had come to proffer it."

The man's face brightened as he told her how much obliged he was, how sadly neglected the children necessarily were, and how sorely they needed kind words, wholesome food and pure air.

Here at last Cecilia had found a field of labor. She drew off her shawl, and began her task by examining the children's school books. Then she walked through the room and conversed at length with each of the scholars. Their faces lighted as she approached them, and they confided readily their little stories to her willing ears.

"You must be the Madonna, I think!" whispered a fair-haired child, as Mrs. Elliot bent over her to smooth her curly head.

Cecilia's heart was won by this tender speech, and when, by-and-by, she rose to put on her shawl, she was astonished to find how many hours had slipped away.

"I do not want the signora to go," came in plaintive accents from the little boy whose cold hand she had warmed in her own.

"I will come back, little one, to-morrow, and fetch you some dainties and some pretty books!"

"But you must promise," urged the boy. And Cecilia promised.

When Cecilia went home that afternoon she bore a lighter heart than she had known for many a day. In active sympathy with others she had found the secret of self-oblivion. One thought absorbed her—how to relieve the melancholy lot of those poor children, and make their lives permanently happier. She revolved a hundred schemes in her mind, for she had determined in the course of this first visit to take the whole burden

of the school on her own shoulders. The teachers were not precisely incompetent, but they were ignorant or careless of the measures requisite to secure the true welfare of their scholars, and had seemed perfectly willing to submit their authority to her better judgment and longer purse.

It was a great pleasure to Mary to mark how well her plan had succeeded; to see her sister so quiet, so thoughtful, yet not unhappy.

The next morning Cecilia rose betimes and began preparations for her second visit to her new *protégés*. No sooner was breakfast over, and her husband gone, than she summoned the man-servant to her aid. She filled a hamper with buttered rolls and sliced beef, not forgetting to add all the children's books she could lay hold of, and then, attended by John, set forth for the school.

Joy fell on those dull little hearts when her pleasant face appeared in the doorway. There was no silence now, but a unanimous shout of "Teacher's come!" "The pretty lady's come again, and brought us some goodies as she promised!" And, indeed, a pretty woman, prettily dressed, she came to those starved, weary hearts like flowers to the sick, or soft breezes that breathe of summer, of fresh dews and sweet country scents. They stretched forth their arms to her eagerly, and she folded them, one after another, in her embrace. After each had eaten a sandwich, Cecilia had gathered them all about her, and, reading a chapter from an English Bible, repeated and explained the text in Italian until they seemed to comprehend its meaning. Next she taught them some simple songs which they might

sing in chorus, and so the time fled rapidly away until, long before she expected it, the hour of leave-taking arrived.

"You look tired," said Henry one day, when she came home from a long visit to her school.

"Do I? I have been often tired of late."

"You seem to me a good deal changed, Cecilia! You have lost the sensitive temper you used to have, but with it much of your old mirthfulness is gone. You are always quiet and serious now."

"Am I? Will Henry," she asked herself, "never understand me?"

"Sometimes, I fancy, there are lines deepening on this dear young face—lines that ought not to be there!"

"I am growing an old lady, I suppose," she said, laughing.

"But I shall love this dear face, young or old."

"When you are in the mood, you mean! At other times you will not care for it."

This was true enough. Henry was a man of capricious disposition, and very changeful in the expression of feeling; but Cecilia need not have said so at this moment. No sooner had the words passed her lips than she regretted them. She threw her arms around his neck.

"Do you really love my face?" said she.

"I should love it better were it a gayer one!"

A cloud came over it now. She had been trying so hard to do what might seem right and well done in his eyes, and this was the result. Her soul had been struggling toward the light, but the face which should have mirrored it had only grown dark and dull. All had

been vain, she thought; but she was mistaken—all was not in vain. Henry had perceived the struggle, and, though he had said not a word, had paid it the homage of respect and sympathy. He was not one of those persons who proclaim all they feel. He shrank with almost morbid aversion from anything like sentimentality.

“You should not criticise a face while the owner is present!” she said, smiling and trying to control her feelings. “I will tell you one day what it is I am doing, and you will not chide my grave face then.”

“What are you doing? I was sure something was in the wind. Tell me, is it real work? In that case I should love you dearly. Tell me; that’s an angel!” But Cecilia only smiled, and answered, “What is unknown is most prized.”

One afternoon, not many days after the last conversation, Henry had come home earlier than usual from his business. “Where is Cecilia, Mary?” he asked of his sister-in-law. “John says that she went out early this morning, and has not since returned. I feel anxious about her.”

“I do not know where she is.”

“Did she not mention where she was going?”

“She did not, that I remember.”

“But I cannot imagine where she can remain all day, and without your knowing anything of her whereabouts. I cannot help being a good deal worried, Mary!”

“I thought you held worry and nervousness mere woman’s folly!” said Mary, smiling.

“So I do when they are causeless or exaggerated; but here is something I cannot account for. This absence is extraordinary; it never happened before.”

"Neither can poor Cecilia explain your non-appearance when you are detained away."

"The case is very different; a man knows how to take care of himself."

"So he thinks, at any rate!"

"I shall go out to look for her!" cried Henry, snatching up his hat. "Unluckily I do not know where to look."

"Don't be a goose, Henry! Come here and look at my picture; is it not pretty?"

Henry sat down, presently got up again, glanced at Mary's picture, said abstractedly that it was very pretty, strolled to the window, then looked at his watch. Mary enjoyed his anxiety, for she had seen her sister exhibit the same nervousness. She was mischievous enough to hope that Cecilia might not return too soon, and glanced now and then at the clock. Half an hour had already passed.

"I can bear it no longer," he said, finally; "I shall go out to look for her; her absence is inexplicable!"

"Wait a moment and I will go with you," said Mary; "I am beginning to feel anxious, too!" She put on her bonnet, and they went out together, Mary leading the way toward Cecilia's school.

"Where are you going?" said Henry.

"I do not precisely know, but I have a sort of instinct that she is to be found somewhere in this quarter."

"How absurd, Mary! We are quite out of the common track. These are not shops and houses that Cecilia would be likely to visit!"

"Now, Henry, once in your life be guided by me! Cecilia said something about First avenue when she went out, and of going to see some poor people."

The two walked quickly on until they reached the house where Mary knew her sister probably was, unless, indeed, she had crossed them on her way home. Mary went up the steps, and, followed closely by Henry, groped her way along the dark, narrow hall. There was a door at the end of the passage. This she pressed open very softly, and exposed the whole interior to Mr. Elliot's gaze. There sat Cecilia, her back turned to the visitors; one arm encircled a little girl, who nestled close to her side; at her knee stood another child, ciphering on a tiny slate; other little ones were clustered around her, evidently listening with the greatest interest. Suddenly one of them pointed to the door. Cecilia turned, and, seeing the new-comers, reddened to the roots of her hair.

"Mary!" she cried, "how did you come here?"

"Who is that gentleman?" whispered the children.

"That is my husband. Come in, Henry!"

Henry came forward; his eyes were fixed on Cecilia, and she could see that there were tears in them.

"He ought to be a very good gentleman," said one little boy, looking up at him.

"Why ought he to be good," said Henry, "more than another?"

"Oh, because your signora is so good!" said the boy, laughing.

"Would you like to hear them sing?" inquired Cecilia.

Henry nodded.

She raised her finger and began, "I want to be an angel!"

They all joined in the chorus. It was touching to hear their shrill, infant voices.

"I must go now," said Cecilia, taking up her hat; "I must say good-by!"

"Oh, don't go! don't go!" cried her little friends.

"Yes, but I must! I cannot keep Mr. Elliot and my sister waiting. "Good-by for to-day! I shall come back to-morrow; that is not far distant!"

The three walked out together. Henry did not say a word, but, drawing Cecilia's arm in his, pressed it closer to his side.

"Is that the work you told me of?" he whispered.

"Yes, Henry, and a work I love!"

"I, too, love it!" he said.

That evening, after dinner, when the two were alone together, Cecilia looked beseechingly at her husband, and said, "Don't go to your club, Henry, to-night."

"I had no thought of going," he answered, and seating himself by her side, drew her tenderly toward him.

She laid her head upon his shoulder. "Dear Henry," she said, "it is long since I have known this sweet rest."

"Believe me, I have missed you, darling," he answered, and looked with eyes of love upon her earnest face.

"Oh, Henry, I feel so happy when you are good to me. Do you know, dearest—I want to tell you all, though it is hard to say it—it was Rosa Thornton who first showed me the work for which I was fitted. A kind boon, was it not, bestowed by that poor circus girl whom I treated so rudely when she came to our house? She requited my scorn by teaching me how to win your respect, perhaps your love, Henry."

"Cecilia?" said Henry, kneeling at her feet.

"What is it, Henry? Speak! you frighten me."

"Cecilia, I have something to tell you—something

that for months has weighed upon my heart. I have done you a wrong. The only expiation I can make is confession. I am unworthy of your love."

"For God's sake, Henry, tell me what you mean!"

"I will tell you, Cecilia. When that young girl was here—"

"Rosa Thornton?"

"Yes."

"Did you love her, Henry?" she asked, in a hollow voice.

"No, darling; I have always loved you and you alone. But I was fascinated by her. It was a sudden temptation, the blind impulse of a moment; but the man who is guilty of such weakness no longer merits the love of a true woman. She called me a traitor as I was. My darling, my wife, can you be merciful and forgive?"

"Dearest Henry," she said slowly, "I forgive you. I, too, have to ask forgiveness. I was capricious and exasperating. I seemed cold to you. I had been taught to hide my feelings. I was afraid of displeasing you—of lessening your love. But I have always loved you with my whole soul. I have loved you so dearly, so passionately, that I have not always loved you wisely."

"You are a noble woman," said Henry, "a noble, generous woman. It shall be my life's labor to make myself worthier of you."

They sat long in silence. His arms enfolded her in a fond embrace; her head nestled upon his breast. The twilight had well-nigh faded, and the room was darkening fast; but upon the young wife's face shone a new light, that brought sunshine to the heart of her husband.

"Darling, all is forgotten, is it not?" he said.

"All, forever," she whispered, "save only our love."

CHAPTER XV.

ROSA'S voyage passed without any incidents of note. She was ill during the first few days, and kept her berth. When at length she ventured to go on deck she secured a snug seat under the lee of the wheel-house, where she could be sheltered and undisturbed. She wrapped her shawl about her and drew her hood tightly over her face, but could not altogether escape observation.

Two or three gentlemen in particular regarded her with marked attention, and laid wagers in the smoking-room as to her nativity and social status. On one occasion, the most enterprising of the party sprung forward with an offer to carry her blanket shawl down to her state-room;—but she replied coldly that she required no assistance, to the discomfiture, and, as he had lost his wager, much also to the damage of the courteous gentleman.

Mysteries, however, on ship-board are short-lived, and it was presently reported that the celebrated circus-rider, who had made so much noise in New York, was among the passengers, and from that hour all the young swells of the ship's company considered themselves privileged to offer her any civilities (so they translated impertinences) they chose. Rosa soon found cause to change her place, and seated herself apart from the rest,

with her head turned away from the deck and its merry promenaders.

One day the young girl, whose bitter grief at leaving New York had drawn Rosa's attention, came over to where our heroine sat, and asked timidly if she were not lonely there. Being answered in the affirmative, she took a seat near her, and soon fell into intimate conversation. When Rosa, among other things, told her that she was going home, her companion regretted mournfully that she, for her part, had no home to revisit; she had been sent out to be governess in an American family, who were to pass the winter in Rome; she had no parents living, and the elderly person who had attended her to the steamer was only her uncle. He was rich and had offered her a home, but there were reasons why she did not wish to be dependent on him. Rosa suggested that they might travel together as far as Genoa. Her new acquaintance, however, expected to meet at Paris some friends of her uncle, with whom she was to spend a fortnight, and afterward to go to Switzerland, where the family she was to live with would meet her.

One method of relieving the tedium of life at sea, Rosa and her new acquaintance could not follow themselves; but, as it formed the staple of conversation at all times and places, they became sufficiently familiar with it. This was the intellectual pastime of betting on the ship's time—how many knots had been made in the past twenty-four hours; how many would be made in the next; from these abstruse data, to calculate the hour of the ship's arrival in port. It was the custom of these amateurs to conduct their discussions in the immediate

vicinity of Rosa, in order, by loud laughter and debate, to attract her attention; but she heeded them little, and they were fain to retire in high dudgeon at the small effect they had produced.

At length, the Westphalia came within sight of land. The distant coast slowly detached itself from the mist that enveloped it. The long line of desolate sand-hills gradually, as if touched by some magic wand, opened, and disclosed houses, steeples and towers.

There was life and movement in the busy port, and blithe welcome awaited many of the ship's company, but Rosa had no friends there to greet her; not a soul had counted the days since her departure, and scanned the weather, fearing and hoping for her sake; not one heart had throbbed the faster for the telegram that announced her safe arrival. A chilling sense of isolation crept over her as the shore drew nearer. What was this old world to her—or she to it? Alone! alone! she echoed the word, until her eyes were dim with tears.

After a brief stay at Brest, the vessel steamed away for Havre. Another day, and Havre rose in sight; the voyage was at an end. Yet Rosa hardly shared the delight of her companions; it was no pleasure tour that awaited her on those sunny shores, but earnest, serious work—work which involved her destiny. She meant to land among the first, and take the earliest train for Paris, for she hoped, before another night, to be on her way to Italy. There, if anywhere, lay her career, there opened for her an indefinite future, in whose dim vistas she saw, or hoped she saw, a laurel wreath.

When Rosa reached Paris, she had just time enough to bid her friend good-by, to dine, and ride to the station

of the Lyons railway, where she took the train for Nice. Having had the prudence to procure a first-class ticket, she was allotted a place in the compartment reserved for ladies, and was soon fast asleep. Arriving at Nice, after a long but uneventful ride, she took the diligence for Genoa, where she arrived early in the morning.

Taking a vetturina, Rosa drove to a house in the street of Santa Catarina, which she had formerly known as a boarding house. There was one small room at her disposal—in that she installed herself, and now she was at home in Italy once more.

She flung open her window, and looked forth into the familiar streets, whose very air seemed redolent of flowers. Was it possible that two short weeks ago she had been on another continent—in that great American city, which differed so utterly from this! How distinct were the costumes, gestures, expressions of the passers-by, from those which met her gaze from her lodgings in the Third avenue. Instead of the pale, thin-visaged, shoulder-stooping man of business, and the woman of fashion, rustling in her rich silks, there below her passed the burly facchino, the friar in his brown gown, impudent-looking officers trailing their long swords, black-browed women, and bright-eyed girls, whose good looks were set off by long veils of white muslin, disposed with artful simplicity about their heads. Rosa leaned out of the window to watch the scene. “Oh, Italy!” she murmured, as she shut the casement, “thou art but a strange, cold mother to thy returning child! Was it thee I called by the fond name of home? Home, alas!—to make it homelike needs some loving hearts.”

Rosa took up her Shakspeare, and opening the volume

at Romeo and Juliet, her eyes caught the line which Mr. Livingstone had quoted: "Parting is such sweet sorrow." She closed the book hastily—the words caused her pain. She turned to Scribe's play, and fell to reciting the part of Adrienne.

She broke off abruptly—"I must see Helena Ortelli!" she exclaimed. "They wrote me that she was living here in Genoa. Why, I wonder, did she leave the stage?—in the zenith of her powers, too? To lead the life of a recluse, as they said she did! But how am I to find her? In some way it must be done, for I must see her—talk with her! I will not leave her door until she has heard me. She will not deny me—for she looked so good—so like an angel—when I saw her. It is true, I was then very young, and since that day I have learned to put less trust in faces!"

Rosa stood motionless for some moments, rapt in her thoughts, then went on with the part she was studying.—"Que n'aurais-je pas tenté pour une rivale!"—"Une rivale!" she echoed, with curling lips and flashing eyes. Presently, in the midst of Adrienne's passionate sentences, she cut short her rehearsal with, "I will go to old Signor Rossi! He was friendly to me, and once—I remember now—once I saw him walking with the great actress, chatting and laughing as if the two were well acquainted. No doubt he can give me her address."

No sooner had the thought entered Rosa's mind, than she caught up her bonnet and mantle, and was already in the street, before she had asked herself the preliminary question, where Signor Rossi lived? Directories there were none—there New York had an advantage over Genoa. Should she try the post-office? No, the best

course was to go straight to the theatre. True, he had long since retired from the stage, but somebody there must know where he was to be found. To the theatre she turned, and applying at the box office, was informed, that the Signor Rossi's apartments were in *Pietra Minuta*. Up the steep, narrow streets, which looked like fissures in the cliff, climbed Rosa, and came at length to the designated door. To her inquiry came the welcome answer, "Signor Rossi C'e!" She entered, and, after waiting a long time, heard the old man's step in the passage. He came across the room, screwing up his eyes to distinguish his visitor.

"Signor Rossi does not remember me," she said.

"It is true, signorina, but I feel profoundly honored by this visit."

"Can you not recall," she continued, "a child who, five years ago, rode in the circus here at Genoa—with whom, after the spectacle, you walked home, holding her hand in yours? She was a mere child then, but she knew it was a great honor to have the famous actor, Signor Rossi, at her side."

"I remember her very well. What has become of the pretty creature?"

"I am she," said Rosa, blushing and laughing.

He took both her hands in his, and seemed delighted to see her again. "Bella! Bellissima!" he exclaimed, admiringly, and sat down by her side, still holding her hands. She did not withdraw them—he was such an old man, and she knew it was only his Italian way. It was so sweet to be kindly treated by any one, that his friendly tones went to her heart. He made her tell him all she had seen and done since they last met, saying he

had heard of her in Paris. She told her story, and at last came out with her great secret—she wished him to give her a note of introduction to Helena Ortelli.

“But do you know,” said he, “that she is no longer Helena Ortelli, but the Contessa Malaspina—that she has shut herself up from the whole world, and will not see a living soul—not even her old friend Rossi?”

“But you might write to her,” urged Rosa, coaxingly; “she could not be displeased at that! Oh, pray, Signor Rossi! do not refuse this favor! The hope of my life depends on it!” She clasped her hands, and looked in his face so beseechingly, that he had not the heart to deny her.

“Well, well!” he said, “I will write to her, but you must do the rest. She is very haughty and wayward, and may take umbrage at an attempt of this kind, in the teeth of her pronounced desires. You ought not to hope, my little girl, that the countess will do anything for you. I do not say, however, that she may not—perhaps your sweet face may prove a passport to your favor! It is true, you women care little for beauty in your own sex—but Helena used to be handsome enough to bear the most inquisitive sunlight, and the presence of the fairest at her side. How it is now, I do not know, but fear she is changed. How magnificent that woman was! I played Hippolytus once, to her Phædre, and her acting so magnetized me, that for the first time in my life I forgot my cues, and stood silent with staring eyes when my turn came to speak. She was a grand actress!”

Proceeding to a little writing-desk, he wrote a letter of introduction, and, handing it to his young visitor:

“I am not sure, my dear, whether I do well, or no; but

you impulsive young creatures are like patent corkscrews to our old heads. Before we dream of it, pop goes the cork, and fizz goes the foam. Perhaps the latter, this time, may spot the silk dress of the Contessa Malaspina; but I shall cast the blame on you!"

"No," said Rosa, "you shall not be censured—I will stand the brunt of the whole! I am so much obliged to you, Signor Rossi—indeed I am! I never expected so cordial a welcome. Good-by, sir!—I wish you would come to see me."

"Yes, I understand!" said he, "you can invite with impunity an old fellow like me!"

Rosa smiled. "You know you would consider any woman rash, who thought that," she said; "believe me, I shall be truly glad to see you again. Good-by, Signor Rossi—and many, many thanks!"

"First find out whether I merit your thanks, and then come yourself and bring them. Addio!" He watched her light form until it vanished down the street, and then turned back into his room, which, to the kindly old man, seemed suddenly plunged in shadow.

When Rosa left the abode of Signor Rossi, she hastened to the nearest piazza, and there taking a carriage, drove to the Palazzo Doria. For some moments after she alighted, she could not resist gazing with awe at the sumptuous edifice. At length, she knocked timidly at the gate, which was opened by a woman conspicuously unwashed, attended by a brood of ragged brats, all of whom, in a sort of chorus of dumb-show, pointed her further on. Following the passage they had indicated, Rosa came on a second gate, which opened on a marble staircase.

She went slowly up the steps, lingering over the frescoes and bas-reliefs which adorned the walls, and struggling the while to pluck up courage for her enterprise. Instinct told her—and experience, too—that it was far more trying—when she had favors to ask—to face a woman than a man. Reaching the top of the stairs, she rang a bell, and a door was opened by a withered peascod of an usher, appareled in a scarlet waistcoat, who, seeing Rosa, began straightway to grind out in a nondescript dialect, half Genoese, half Venetian: “These, which you see here, are frescoes made by a pupil of the great Raphael; those on the left, represent Venus—that yonder is the Goddess of Love, attended by the Graces; those on the right are after the antique, in the late Pompeian style!”

“Yes,” said Rosa, smiling, “they are very beautiful!” The man dropped his cicerone tone—“Oh, the signora is Italian! Then of course she does not come to see the frescoes. I thought she did not look like an Inglese! Will the Signora enter?”

He led her into a narrow hall, one side of which was lined with life-size portraits of men clad in various armor, and brilliant mediæval costumes. It gave Rosa a twinge to look at them, for they reminded her forcibly of the harlequin dress which George, the clown, used to wear—but the wrinkled, satyr-like faces that peered out from them had little in common with her old friend’s frank and honest, though somewhat woeful countenance. “Yes!” replied the usher to her look of inquiry, “These are Andrew Doria and his brothers! And that is the nephew, Gianettino Doria, his favorite—whom the cruel Fieschi slew.” Rosa paused, and surveyed them with

interest, but recollecting the purpose of her visit, asked if the Signora Contessa Malaspina was at home.

“Is the signorina a relation—may I ask?”

“No! but I wish to see her. I have a letter for her.”

“If the signorina will favor me with it, I will personally deliver it!” This assurance seemed to be, on his part, an instance of the greatest possible condescension, for he waved his hand as if to say—“Could more be done for Victor Emmanuel, or Doge Andrea Doria himself?”

With a smile, Rosa handed him the letter and her card, but before proceeding to execute her orders, the servant ushered her into a large apartment, containing a huge chimney place, within whose ample sides in ancient days young troubadours might have sat and played their guitars. From the ceiling Jupiter and his allies were hurling the Titans from Olympus, while other frescoes, depicting classic or mediæval myths, adorned the walls. In the middle of this room was a group of persons, who were evidently tourists. There was the regulation pater-familias, with bushy, sandy-colored whiskers; a burly lad, an exact likeness of his Anglican sire, seen through a diminishing glass, and rejoicing in the embryo chin-tufts of the same execrable hue, and a young woman with flaming cheeks and reddish hair, which, packed in a net, hung half-way down her neck. Each of these interesting persons was perusing, with pious credulity, a volume printed for their edification by John Murray, of London.

“Hum—yes—oh—! Really a neat bit of painting!” pronounced the elder Briton, in a strong, English accent,

directing his eye-glass with critical approval toward the ceiling. "Raphael's own, I see!"

"By no means, dear sir!" cried the youth, with an air of profound wisdom. "That is a pupil's work! I can't quite make out his name here in Murray," he continued, turning again to the source of his connoisseurship, "There's lots of humbug in this sort of thing. I shouldn't wonder if old what-d'ye-call-'em did it himself."

"Now don't be absurd, Walter," said the girl, "it was Raphael's own pupil did it; and I'm sure 'tis beautiful!"

"There's lots of chaff in that sort of thing, you know!" pursued the youth.

"I am sure, I don't know why you travel at all, if you can't take interest in anything. You are always sneering! I dare say, now, you don't believe this was the very chair in which Charles the Fifth reclined?"

"Of course I don't! Why in the world should they preserve that particular chair longer than any other piece of worn-out furniture? Everybody must sit down somewhere—must they not? And why should a Spaniard's sitting down in it enhance the value of that article?"

"Because he was a great emperor! and it seems to bring him nearer to see the very chair he used!"

"Great humbug, I call him! Him, and the rest of those historical parties!"

"Pray speak to him, papa, and bid him respect such things. It is wrong to speak irreverently of a great man and monarch!"

Parental interference proved unnecessary, for this young apostle of British breeding espied Rosa at this

moment, and detecting in her a benighted native of the continent, with whom the etiquette of St. James' street would be superfluous, approached her. Rosa had her back turned toward the tourists, and was gazing at a worm-eaten palanquin which had once borne the great Doria himself through the streets of his proud city, on his return from conquests in the Levant. She had lost herself in the memories it awakened, when some one rudely tapped her parasol. She turned quickly, and seeing a singularly unattractive young man, merely opened her eyes a little wider and waited for him to explain his conduct.

"Beg pardon!" said he carelessly, "that's a comical kind of old-fashioned coach, isn't it?" Rosa stared at him. "Molto bello!" he continued, drawing out his stock of Italian, meaning evidently to put forth the claim of cosmopolitan culture, and at the same time reveal to this young woman the hidden beauties of her own language. "Molto bello, molto bello!" he repeated, pointing with a little flourish of the finger alternately at the chair and herself. Anon he paused, pondering the address with which he had blended mastery of a foreign tongue with the delivery of graceful compliments—blissfully ignorant of the fact that he had transferred both Rosa and the chair to the masculine gender.

"If I chose to answer your impertinence," said Rosa, in pure English, "I should do so in your own language! Be good enough to leave me!"

The youth was subdued, and gave a final proof of his British origin by blushing, not merely in the cheeks, but all over his throat. In his discomfiture, he confided to his sister his impression that he had accosted a genuine

Dogesse. "Mighty high airs she gives herself, anyhow! Couldn't she tell a gentleman when she saw him?"

At this moment the usher returned, and coming up to Rosa, informed her that the countess would receive her with pleasure.

The kind message somewhat composed Rosa's mind, and feeling, on the whole, more courage than she had been able to summon up all day, she hurried after the old servitor. Passing through a bed-chamber, which she was told had been used by Andrea Doria, but was scantily furnished now, she came to a drawing-room, at whose threshold the usher left her. Rosa, finding herself alone, gazed anxiously around, but the windows were darkened, and, at first, little could be discerned; but gradually, as her eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, one object after another detached itself from the background, until the whole room and its furniture took form before her, and interpreted in some sort, as such things do, the tastes and habits of the owner. In the centre of the apartment was a broad table, draped in a black velvet cloth, whose border was embroidered with gold. On this lay a volume of Alfieri, richly bound, and an album, with massive golden clasps, which was apparently locked. That was all—there were none of those trinkets and bijoux which usually litter a lady's table. The window curtains, like the cloth, were of black velvet, and the hangings of gold. Over the piano—whose covering preserved the same sombre colors, and, to Rosa's eyes, made the instrument resemble a bier—hung a picture, in life size, of a woman perhaps twenty-five years old. The form was exquisitely graceful—not voluptuous, like Aphrodite's, nor fully rounded like a Hebe's, but light and delicate as Psyche's.

It was the face—not the form, which first arrested attention, as it fixed Rosa's now. The dark eyes were large and deep, and seemed looking beyond the present into the mysterious distance. The features were extremely regular, so regular as to appear cold; but there was that in the eyes which well might baffle the beholder, the intense passion of a Phædre, subdued and prisoned beneath the calm, chaste spirit of an Iphigeneia. Rosa felt that she to whom those eyes belonged might have been a protagonist in some tragedy of the real world, yet, at the same time, by the irony of her double nature, an indifferent observer of her own life-drama.

Absorbed in such reflections, Rosa stood before the picture, when suddenly the curtain which masked the door was lifted, and disclosed the perfect counterpart of the figure upon the canvas. For some moments Rosa could not speak, but looked blankly from one to the other with an expression of complete bewilderment.

"Yes, it is I!" said the lady, coldly; "that is myself as I was! But that is long ago!"

"It is you as you are this instant!" cried Rosa, with uncontrollable admiration.

Apparently the lady did not notice her remark, for she continued, "You are, I suppose, Mademoiselle Rosa Thornton?"

"Si, signora!" said Rosa. The color rushed to her brow as she encountered the piercing glance of the countess.

"Sit down, Miss Thornton! You know who I am."

"You are," said Rosa, "of all the world, she whom I have most desired to meet face to face. I saw you act once, years ago! I was quite young then—but I never

forgot it. Signora, I have thought of you constantly since that day; you have been my ideal—my dream! Ah!" she said, catching her breath, "if I might only live to be to others what you were to me that night!"

"You saw me on the stage, then—where?"

"Here, in Genoa. I was a mere child, as I said, but the memory of that evening is fresh as yesterday. And your face, signora—as I saw it then—has haunted me always, like those strange Rembrandt pictures, whose shadows tempt us to look closer still."

"What did I act?"

"Medea!"

"Did you understand it?"

"I thought so; but I know now I did not!"

"You are beautiful," said Helena, slowly and quietly, "very beautiful!"

Again Rosa blushed to her temples.

"Do you not think yourself beautiful?"

"I care nothing for beauty," cried Rosa; "I would be great!"

"Do you believe you can ever be that?"

"I believe it!" said Rosa, with fervor. "Do not misjudge my words, but, indeed, I feel that within me which demands expression—something that burns the heart, like fire. I am very ignorant, I know—very foolish yet, but this aspiration that throbs so wildly—that pants for escape—for utterance—I feel it is genuine, neither mockery nor delusion!"

"It is the artistic instinct," said Helena, and her voice grew sympathetic; "one reads it in your face, in every gesture. Now tell me what you want from me."

"I hoped," said Rosa, "I had faith that you would not

send me uncounseled away. How I found courage to take this step, I know not—but here I am. If you do not help me,” she spoke in tones that were almost despairing, “I can look for help nowhere. You are my last hope!”

“What have you done hitherto?”

Rosa reddened—then grew pale again, but did not answer.

“Tell me,” repeated Helena, in softer accents, “what have you been doing hitherto? You need not be afraid of me.”

“I do not think I am afraid of any one,” Rosa said, and her lips curled slightly, while something of the old passionate look flashed from her eyes. Then, lowering her voice, she said, “I was a circus-rider!”

“A circus-rider!”

“Si, signora! Ah, you think it a vile calling—but I was not vile. Ah, signora!” she cried, clasping her hands, while the tears fell fast upon her cheek, “I came to you, as one sister to another, impulsively, instinctively—I know not why. I only knew that the same love for what in art is high and noble lived in both, that while your soul may be like the ocean, and mine but a tiny rivulet, yet both are stirred by the same aspiration, both swept forward by one yearning toward the same ideal. I will study her gestures, I told myself, her look, her accents, until I have made myself her very mirror, and she shall say to me one day, while she folds me in her embrace: ‘Rosa, thou art my second self!’”

“No, dear child,” said Helena, watching the varying emotion that flitted like alternate cloud and sunshine across Rosa’s face, “thou shalt be thyself—something

far higher than I could ever be! But where," she continued, and her manner changed to marble-like immobility, "where did you learn what you know—and what you feel?"

"I do not know what you mean."

"It was innate, then," murmured Helena to herself; "it must have been innate;" then addressing Rosa, "I never teach—I have never taught any one. The truth is, I have always been at war with the other artists of the stage—at least—I was, when I cared for such things. That was long ago," she added, pressing her hand to her brow. "It was my creed—my heresy, they called it—to believe in uninstructed talent, in genius that teaches itself, and almost without conscious effort—by intuition—conceives the true and effective method. I held in my hands the book which contained my part, coldly perusing it; nothing stirred me in the lines—I read them aloud—when suddenly the shadowy words took shape and fervor before me, started up into things of life. At the best, frozen statues before, they sprang from their niches now, and with facile grace caught nature's gesture and attitude. Then the blood coursed like lava through my veins. I felt pity, anguish, love by turns—and then—and then, my child, I made my audience feel it too—they felt with me—wept with me; they remembered not Helena Ortelli, they cried, 'It is Clytemnestra—it is Phædre!'"

Rosa sat transfixed, her eyes riveted on the face before her. That face commonly was pale as marble, and as cold—but now and then, when she spoke, it lightened with a rare radiance, as if the morning sun had flashed upon Alpine snow. Helena had closed her eyes for a moment,

but presently she began again. "The rest, however, declared my method was wrong, that acting must be studied as a profession, where one begins at the bottom of the ladder, and climbs painfully and slowly upward; that all arts implied a novitiate, and as none could paint at starting an immortal picture, which was only to be wrung from laborious years, so must the actor from the nettle failure, pluck at last the flower success! But I had no time to spare for discipline like this. My mother was left a widow. We had been rich, and thought ourselves so still, the day my father died; the next, we knew ourselves to be bankrupt, and without me my mother would have starved. I went on the stage; the devotees of tradition were scandalized, critics and rivals raved, their partisans formed a *clacque* to hiss me. It was all in vain—I triumphed. But they were consoled when I fell—they were all glad, except Salirni, who loved art for art's sake. I have told you all this, my child, that you might learn something from my mistakes. (You must be more prudent than I was; you need not surrender your convictions, but you need not parade them. either. You must not unmask too rudely the errors of others, or sting too sharply their self-conceit—for they are cruel, and they are strong. ✓ Ah, I should be glad to see my old enemies humbled once again, and proud to see them vanquished by your hand, and then, when men asked, 'Who taught her?' to hear the reluctant reply—'She was trained by Helena Ortelli!' They have not forgotten me yet!")

"Why," cried Rosa, with enthusiasm, "why do you not act yourself? How could you bring yourself to turn your back on such success as yours—with

such a grand career. You would have made yourself immortal."

Helena shook her head. "Ours, at best, is a fleeting fame, for our art deals not with marble or canvas, but with a medium far more ephemeral. Through the eye and ear we win admittance to the brain, but when the living eye and ear to which we appealed are dead—what remains to authenticate our merit? We perish with the audience we moved. Oh God! I have often murmured, as I have left the boards where a thousand eyes had dwelt on me alone, a thousand voices proclaimed their gratitude and joy—yes, while the long brava! yet echoed in my ears—my God, I cried, is there no way to fix this glory? May it be neither carved, painted, written, nor sung? Alas, no! It will vanish—break like a roseate mist, and where once it added color, lustre and mystery to the landscape not a trace of it will remain behind. Another mist will rise to-morrow—to drape nature with fresh loveliness, and translate her into a novel beauty—to die as surely in its turn. So it will be with you and me. I was—you shall be;—but the author we interpret was, is, and is to come. They said I made Alfieri to live again; they may say as much one day of you. Empty vaunts! Alfieri dies not—while we—what are we but poor tapers that, flickering for an hour, illumine the letters of his name which are graven in deathless brass!"

"Ah," said Rosa, "if I might only light the taper! Would I felt sure of that!"

"But you must feel sure. You must strangle your doubts—your fears! I tell you nothing but a resolution stubborn as granite, and elastic as steel, can cope with the lions in your path!"

"I had a glimmer of this before," said Rosa, "yet was not daunted; but since I have seen you, signora—forgive me if I confess it—I feel helpless and hopeless, as I can fancy an unchiseled block might feel beside a faultless statue!"

"It will be easy," said Helena, smiling now for the first time—a sad, weary smile that lent, however, a sweetness to her features Rosa had not deemed they could wear. "It will be easy, I think, to chisel it!"

"You have been very—very kind!" said Rosa, rising, "but I impose too long on your good nature."

"Where are you going?" inquired Helena.

"Home!" said Rosa. "That is," she added, "to the only home I have!"

"And where is that?" pursued the countess.

"In Santa Catarina—I have hired a little apartment there!"

"Who is with you?"

"I am alone!"

"Alone!—and so young! That will never do!"

"Oh, I have lived alone all my life, and no harm has come of it!"

"Have you no mother living?"

"I have a mother," said Rosa, coloring.

"Where is she?"

"In Sardinia!"

"Why does she not come here, to take care of you. She must be sent for!"

"She cannot come!" said Rosa, quickly. "I have always lived alone, traveled alone, and what I am I have made myself. Do not imagine, then, that I cannot take care of myself now! I have been for years—as I told

you—a circus-rider! I was glad to be questioned, for I wanted courage to confess it. Strange, is it not? Only three months have passed since I lived that life, yet when I look back to it, I cannot believe that I could sink so low! No, that young girl who night after night repeated before a despicable rabble her equestrian feats, was another creature—not myself—not she who has talked with you. When I think of these things, I sometimes fancy I see double. You smile; but you will not laugh, I know. I am not afraid to talk freely before you, although you are—” she hesitated

“So cold?” said Helena.

“No—such a stranger, I meant! But I can speak to you, as if I had known you all my life. Farewell now!” said Rosa; then looking up into her face—“May I kiss you?” she said, pleadingly. Helena drew back. “I never asked before,” said Rosa, in a low tone, “to kiss any one!”

“But you have been kissed?” said Helena, glancing keenly at her.

The blood seemed to rush in waves over poor Rosa’s face. It was a painful sight, and Helena turned her head; then, suddenly stepping forward, kissed the cheek of the blushing girl.

Rosa looked up gratefully. “Thank you!” she said.

“It is the first time for five years that my lips have touched a human face,” Helena said, in a hollow voice. “I meant they never should again. For your sake I have broken a vow. Will you come to me to-morrow? At what hour are you free?”

“Oh, at all hours—when shall you care to see me?”

“Can you come at twelve o’clock?”

“I shall be here at that hour. Farewell, signora!”

The door closed, and Helena was left alone in the gloom of her apartment. Rosa passed hurriedly through halls and corridors, and stepped forth into the sunlight that flooded the streets. She looked back at the window of the countess's room, but, although the sun's rays beat against it, they could not penetrate the heavy curtains, and there was no sign of her friend visible. Rosa was so rapt in the recollections of her visit, and in visions of the new life which opened before her, that she did not notice how many persons turned their heads as she passed by. She was too familiar, moreover, with the demonstrative Italian fashion of signifying admiration, to pay much heed to it. As it was, indeed, almost everybody had something to say. At length, her progress was actually impeded by two young men who, standing directly in her path, composed a species of barricade.

“Fair angel!” began one.

“Divine one!” said the other, “will you not vouchsafe to us the honor of attending you to your home?”

“Let me pass!” said Rosa, looking around her in great distress.

“What bewitching rage!” said one of her persecutors.

“If you are a gentleman,” cried Rosa, “let me pass!” At this, one of them stood aside, and she went on her way.

At last, after sustaining more vulgar scrutiny, and deliberate affronts, she reached her home, and bursting into tears, “Oh!” she cried, “America was a more civilized country than this! There, at least, they keep their insults for those whose position they know—but here, every man has a word of insolence for every woman

whom he meets in the streets. And this is my native land that I so yearned for! Ah, he is not here to protect me. He would have made them suffer for their impertinence; one look out of his brave eyes would have made the scoundrels quail! What deep, sweet eyes they were; when they dwelt on mine, I read such tenderness and pity in them—he seemed to foreknow all the trouble and sorrow that awaited me in this rude world. Oh, God help me—what right had that man to steal away my peace of mind, to rob me of the careless, light heart I had! Knowing I had little else, he might, at least, have left me this—but he was selfish and cruel, like the rest. He thought only of himself.”

CHAPTER XVI.



THE next day, at the appointed hour, Rosa was at Helena's door. The countess received her with coldness of manner that froze poor Rosa's heart. "I hope," she began, timidly, "I do not intrude!"

"No, I am glad to see you—I have looked forward to your coming for hours!"

"You are kind to say so," said Rosa, looking up into her friend's face. What brought, she wondered, such marble pallor on that brow—that repressed look, as of smoldering fire? What made the features so rigid, the eyes so empty of life and light. Rosa longed to take her hand—to press her lips to Helena's cheek—but she did not dare.

"Will you recite something for me?" said Helena.

"I am afraid!"

"You must know no fear, if you are in earnest with your scheme. Are you not to stand one day face to face with an audience of strangers—before harsh critics, and zealous rivals? What will become of you if you tremble then?"

"I should feel, at such a crisis, that everything depended on self-possession, and my courage would rise to the emergency. Besides, I should rely on the inspiration of the moment, and forget my foolish self in presence of

others who had assembled to act and suffer in sympathy with me."

"That was my error," said Helena, with a cold smile. "You ought, by no means, to rely on the inspiration of the moment. You must trust to nothing but your own tried and disciplined powers—and to your thorough knowledge of what is called stage business. You must know, for instance, precisely what to do, as well as say, at every juncture—where to stand, when to move, how to enter and go off—and do all this without the least mistake or hesitation!"

"That would make me a mere automaton," said Rosa.

"On the contrary, it would give you the ease and self-poise you require, and when you are no longer embarrassed about little things, you will lose your nervousness, and forget everything but the emotions you would express. Now, will you let me hear you recite something?"

"What shall I choose?"

"Take Adrienne Lecouvreur!—Begin with that!"

"Will you give me my cues?" said Rosa.

The poor girl was trembling from head to foot. She rose and began the *rôle* of Adrienne, but her voice shook, and she broke down after a few words.

"That will not do at all!" said Helena, severely. "Take the book, and listen to me!"

In a cold, unemotional tone the countess began, and Rosa felt at first a bitter disappointment; the accent was deliciously pure, the voice clear and sweet; the motions, by turns, imposing and graceful, yet the sentiment awakened in the listener was rather admiration than sympathy. But suddenly Helena's face lightened,

her whole form quivered, her voice had gained quality and volume. Helena had reached the lines where the actress, to the face of the Princess de Bouillon, denounces her treachery. Presently came the poison scene, where Adrienne, in her fever, thinks she sees the Comte de Saxe in her rival's box at the opera, hears them whisper tenderly together, sees them clasp one another's hands—maddened with rage and jealousy, she utters a piercing scream—then suddenly recognizing Maurice at her side, falls weeping into his arms; and then, in another access of delirium, hurls her lover from her with scorn. Rosa was electrified—she pressed her hands over her eyes, “I can see no more,” she cried, “it is too dreadful.”

Helena paused, her face still luminous with the fervor of her passion, but, in a few moments, the excitement died away, leaving her features inanimate and cold. Where now were those varied emotions that had flamed before Rosa's eyes—that whirlwind of jealousy and love?

“You inspired me,” said Helena, “now let me inspire you!”

Rosa took the countess's place, and repeated the same lines. “Too tame!” said Helena. “Your elocution is accurate, and your taste excellent, but you want fervor. Ah, that is better! That is well! You have caught it now—from me,” she murmured, “but you will fill the part better than I could, for you are younger! You will make a beautiful Adrienne!” she said, as Rosa finished the *rôle*. “You have all the material, as artists say, that I could wish to work with—to-morrow you shall study this part at home; and, when you study, decipher the several passions that enter into the piece, and then conceive them in action; consider the youth of the heroine,

and the ideal tinge of the affection which she first feels for her young admirer ; follow the deepening of her passion when in him she discovers the hero of her dreams, Maurice de Saxe ; then comprehend her agony, when she believes that a bold, bad woman, but of splendid rank, having wealth and position, which Adrienne has not, has seduced her lover from her—that Maurice has betrayed her for the princess ! And, finally, ponder the incidents and the situations of the piece—the faded flowers she had given him returned, as if in scorn ; the deadly perfume she inhales when she presses them fondly to her lips ; and, finally, her delirium and death. And when you meditate these things, my child, ask yourself continually how you would have acted placed in such fearful straits—decreed to such a destiny. In this way you may compass at last the supreme aim of art—the truthful expression of great passions, escaping, at once, both of those vulgar errors, over-acting, and frigid declamation. Do not forget, my child, that a veritable tragedy does not attempt to portray the lives and feelings of ordinary men, that they are exceptional natures which the chief persons of such a drama reveal, and that exceptional natures suffer with peculiar intensity which, perhaps, no outward expression can ever adequately reveal.”

“What do people mean when they talk of ranting—what is that ?” said Rosa.

“Ranting is not precisely over-acting, but rather, false elocution, an exaggerated utterance of feelings, in themselves genuine. In the lines of a master, heroes and heroines do not rave and shriek like maniacs. In the midst of their delirium they preserve a sort of delicacy which engages sympathy, and although the whole picture

may fill you with horror, it does not excite disgust. You read English, Rosa—study Hamlet's address to the players!"

"I will," said Rosa; "fortunately I have a copy of Shakspeare's plays, which," she added, with a little blush, "a friend in New York gave me."

The countess observed the tell-tale color come and go on Rosa's cheek.

"A foe, rather than a friend, I fear," she said, with an icy smile.

"I know not which he was," returned Rosa, quickly. "By what touchstone, signora, shall one discern friends from foes?"

"Friends!" said Helena, with bitterness—"a woman has no friends! Her own sex," she continued, in hard, dry tones, "her own sex smile on her, and would joyfully destroy her charms while they smile; men hate her, if she accepts their love, and they hate her still more if she returns it, for the *ennui* and satiety that surely overtake them; or, if their souls are exceptionally loyal, vouchsafe perhaps some careless pity, and fitful remorse. When, however, woman's youth is gone, and the lustre of her beauty faded, when death stands ready to fold her in his sombre shadow, when she can love no more as she once loved, suffer no more as it was hers to suffer—yes, then, when such professions bind to nothing, and evoke nothing, some may be heard to say, 'I am her friend!'"

"Then," said Rosa, sadly, "you do not believe in love?"

A fierce light gleamed from Helena's eyes, as she answered: "Love?—Ah, yes, I believe in love! It is the one faith I have—a faith in the reality of love. What is

love, you ask? A consuming, deathless flame; an agony of the soul, comprehending all pangs of doubt, all martyrdoms of self-devotion, all stings of jealousy, all harrowing fears, a wakefulness that is one long torture—a loneliness that means despair. Lonely—for love, in its genuine intensity, is almost never returned in kind, but lavished on some object irresponsible, or unworthy, too frigid, or too mean. Believe me, Rosa, this is love!”

Rosa breathed a low sigh. “Yes, Rosa,” continued the countess, “young as you are, it is well you should know it—this is love!—I show it you as it is—I strip the mask from his hideous features, for it is better you should read them now, than live to learn them after love has beguiled you of your reason and robbed your life of sunshine. Trust no one, Rosa—no living man! While you are yet in his arms, your husband will begin to tire of you. By scorn, you may kindle passion in the hearts of men, but let one spark of affection glimmer in your own breast, and in that hour you will be scorned in turn. I speak bitterly, but truly; not as one who, smitten with leprosy, would disfigure with its loathsome scales a smoother and fairer skin, but as she who, having passed over the dark waters, would stretch forth to you a sister’s hand. I have said so much, my child, because I feel for you a sympathy I did not think I could feel for any one.”

“I do not accept your creed—I will not,” cried Rosa, her face glowing with emotion. “Love exists to bless, not to curse us! Yes, and there is mutual love! Love is not a mistake, because often mistaken. The river’s breast, signora, by the law of its nature, reflects all that crosses its surface; certainly, false faces may be mirrored there—clouds shroud it in darkness—deadly nightshade

blooms along its banks—yet the waters remain clear and wholesome, fit to meet God's eye—to glass the moonlight and the stars! In Love's paradise, if the raven croaks, a nightingale will sing to-morrow; if there are worms, there are gorgeous butterflies—serpents perhaps, but eagles also! And so, if false love lurks beneath a hundred masks, true love, likewise, is protean, and burns unsuspected in many a heart with a holy and perpetual flame!"

Helena's eyes were bent on her young companion in a lingering gaze, where tenderness blended with compassion. She longed to fold her in her arms, to shield and save her if she might, as Niobe would have shielded from the fatal bolt her last surviving darling. But she repressed the longing, and, turning her head, half whispered, "Myself! myself! As if a flower had blossomed from the stem where one died yesterday. Thus, then, rolls on forever the great cycle of life—eternal hope—eternal disenchantment! It is her destiny, as it was mine. But first the world shall recognize her genius—they shall come to look at this *protégé* of mine, and proclaim her the fit pupil of an artist who gave them back more than she had borne away. I feel no jealousy of her, no envy—alas, how could I? If men offered to my thirsty lips a draught which I knew was poisoned, I should be moved with pity, not with jealousy, to see another's hand stretched forth to grasp the cup. What is there for a loyal friend to do but shudder and cry forbear—then, if she puts her lips to the cup, no sin can be imputed to me." She started, for Rosa's eyes were fastened on the countess's face with child-like confidence and love. She returned her look with a glance of tenderness, and went on in a quiet voice:

"Rosa, would you like to live with me? In that way I could guide your studies constantly."

"Like it?" cried Rosa; "I should be eternally grateful!"

"I might be a protection to you," continued Helena.

"You would be everything to me," said Rosa, raising the countess's hand to her lips.

"And yet, one day," said Helena, "you may be the teacher, I perhaps the pupil!"

"Never!" said Rosa.

It was agreed then that her young *protégé* was to live under the countess's roof. Rosa fancied that with every breath she drew in that fine atmosphere, she must inhale inspiration, for in the hours she had spent with Helena, life seemed a new and lovely thing. Every gesture and attitude, every vibration of Helena's voice, had been to her youthful friend a surprise and study. Rosa felt as an eager-hearted tyro might, led from the blank, plastered walls of his dull home, to rooms rich with the works of the great masters. Nor would it be a small gain to the countess to watch this fresh young life, ripening and blending with her own, to find at last something that would rouse her energies, and give her some interest in living. But she had not thought of herself; she had asked Rosa to come to her for Rosa's sake, knowing that she could afford the protection essential to a young and lonely girl.

Rosa had taken up her abode in the Palazzo Doria. There she bloomed like a fresh slip grafted on the old Doria trunk, her young voice filling the long corridors, and her sweet face gleaming from the windows, the cynosure of many an admiring glance from the street

below. Now, for the first time in years, two female forms were to be seen seated by moonlight in the garden, close to the statue of the great Andrea, sculptured as Neptune—for was he not the god of Italian seas? There they communed late into the night, watching the summer sky, or looking across the spacious haven to the point where Doria's galleys had once been moored. In that elder time, the pleasure would have rung on such evenings with the mirth of chatelaines, and men-at-arms, but they were a quiet pair who mused there now, and one of those women might well have been mistaken for some garden statue, but for her white gown's fluttering in the southern breeze. While one, however, sat impassive, the other flitted to and fro, as if she held converse with the birds and flowers. It was, indeed, a charming place and hour; the breeze blew soft and fragrant from orange groves; the ocean surged gently to the shore, rolling its long, green waves on the garden's rocky foot, while the pale moonlight, half revealed, half transfigured the landscape round them, and the nightingale, Italy's laureate, flooded the air with melody. Amid such a scene, Rosa, forgetting everything but the sensation of the moment, would stretch forth her arms in rapture and exclaim, "Divine Italy!"

As they sat thus one night—"Who," said Rosa, "that has dwelt in this lovely land can marvel immortal verse should be sung within its borders, or that Raphael and Leonardo should inform canvas with celestial beauty, when in just such scenes as this they dreamed they saw Heaven opened, and the faces of Jesus and his mother revealed. What wonder is it if man is milder here, and his lips attuned more easily to words of gentleness and

love—nor, for my part, can I think it strange, or shameful, that men should shun warfare and death, where the humblest has so much to live for.”

“Yes,” said Helena; in a hollow voice, “beauty, and love that is born of beauty, have wrought the ruin of Italy. The facile delight of every sense—the soft luxury of living—has rotted, like a cancer, the fibres of our national character. Had man been less happy, he might have risked life more freely in defense of his country and his home. Where outward circumstances are less agreeable, the affections must needs be centred on the pleasures of the heart, and men like the Switzers, who have little to lose but their own self-respect, have proved themselves the best soldiers in Europe. God made fair the Italian fields, but man has sown thick the evil seed of self-indulgence, and must reap the harvest—death. Death, moral and social to-day, and as sure as the grave awaits the coffin, political death to-morrow! Religion languishes among us, the lamp of faith dies out untended in this land of the sun. Amid vines and flowers our people lie basking in the sunshine, heedless of the storm which already lowers along the horizon.”

“Speak not so sadly, signora! The king may yet mend his ways!—His eyes may yet be opened to the people’s shame, and the high mission of the House of Savoy! The next generation of Italians may grow up strong and brave to strike, when the hour comes, for our country’s freedom!”

“There is but one baptism to cleanse the children of Italy, and that,” said Helena, “is the baptism of their own blood. Nothing short of that can regenerate them now. Too much has been done for them by others,

while Italians reclined beneath their olives, and let the fruit fall into their mouths. Even Venice, my beloved, wept away her strength, until her arm lacked force to fling off a sundered chain. I tell you, Italians are but shadows, and Italy but a lovely mausoleum."

"For my part," said Rosa, "I do not think it a tomb at all, but a beautiful garden—the garden of Armida, full of enchantments and bewildering delights."

"Repeat something from Alfieri," said Helena, interrupting her; "you must keep yourself in constant exercise, but you have not worked more than one hour to-day—that was very wrong."

Rosa recited in a low, saddened tone, happily modulated to the place and hour, the part of Virginia. Helena's eye dilated as she listened.

"That is well, very well!" she said, as Rosa ceased. "You gave it all the expression I could wish; the piece is full of sentiment, but it lacks fire—it is a maiden's story—a maiden who sees, for the first time, her face mirrored in the waters of life, whose next wave sweeps into eternity the vision and the maid."

"May I enter?" asked a voice in Italian.

Helena started to her feet, and her face looked to Rosa a shade paler even than usual, as she said—"Who is it?"

A tall, handsome young man was standing on the other side of the iron grating which let into the garden.

"May I come in?" he repeated. "Yes, although over this gate be written, 'All hope abandon ye that enter here,' still I would enter!"

"Come in, Zanini!" she said, seating herself again. He entered. The countess extended her left hand, which he took and pressed to his lips, but without any

appearance of particular fervor or reverence. It looked like a merely formal act of homage, and Helena seemed to take no note of it. "Where do you come from?" she said.

"It is long since I have seen you," he answered, fixing a pair of dark eyes upon her. "I have been a rover, because I knew no better way to while away time. Since you, signora, robbed the world of your light, we poor moths have fluttered in the darkness as best we might. To-night I found your gate open, and ventured in, there was music above—and music below!" he said, glancing at Rosa; "I listened for a time, like an outcast spirit at Eden's gate, and when," he added, laughing, "I could bear it no longer, I cried out—'May I enter?'"

"This is my pupil!" said Helena. Then, turning to Rosa, "Permit me to present Count Zanini—an old friend of the Count Malaspina." This was the first allusion to her husband Rosa had ever heard from the countess.

"A young friend, I hope, you mean!" said the count.

Helena did not answer; her eyes seemed gazing at something far away.

Evidently the count was a man of the world; his eye dwelt for a moment on the countess, then turning, he addressed Rosa. "Your voice fell so sweetly on the night air, that it seems the birds, no less than I, have stopped to listen."

"Oh, they were fast asleep, poor little things, long ago!" said Rosa.

"Can anything sleep on such a night?" he said, giving Rosa a lingering look, as if he were studying her beauty in that mellow moonlight, and sought to grave it in his

mind. Rosa felt that his eyes were upon her, and cast down her own. For some moments they sat in silence, broken only by the murmur of the fountain.

At length—"Do you like our Italy?" he asked.

"I like my Italy!" Rosa answered.

"Oh, I fancied you were—"

"An American?" said Rosa.

The count laughed. "No, signorina! one could hardly make that mistake. When you know me better, you will scarcely accuse me of such stupidity. I cannot say precisely what country I gave you. On the whole, I leaned to Circassia—or Cashmere."

Rosa smiled—"Are you an Italian?"

"You might return my compliment in kind," he replied, "and liken me to an Arab, or a negro, if you please—my skin is dark enough to warrant it."

"I cannot tell whether it is you or the night that is dark," said Rosa, "but I have guessed your nation by your tongue."

"My tongue is not Genoese!"

"No, your accent proves that, signor! Yours is the true *Lingua Toscana in bocca Romana*!"

"You are right, but how you guessed it, I know not."

"By my ear, of course. I should not be a genuine Italian, if I could not distinguish the Tuscan speech. When you, on your part," she added, gayly, repeating his own words, "know me better, you will not accuse me, either, of such stupidity."

"I could accuse you of nothing, save—" he paused, then continued, in a low voice, "save a too fatal beauty." Rosa turned away her head.

"Hardly fatal!" said Helena, coldly, "for she is good as she is fair!"

The count and Rosa started. Both had forgotten the countess's presence.

"I cannot doubt it," said the count, again fixing his eyes on the young girl, "you presented her as your pupil—may I ask what you are teaching the signorina?"

"To distrust every one—to put faith in nothing," said Helena. "Is it not the best of lessons?"

"It is a lesson, signora, which, with all my heart, I hope she may not easily learn."

"Men do well to hope so!" said Helena, with scorn. "Such lessons of truth forestall and thwart them!"

"You were not used to be so severe," he said, in a lowered voice; then, in an ordinary tone, "Pray do not deny me the privilege of taking you and your young friend to drive at an early day? We might go as far as Peglie, and dine there."

"You may come if you choose; I have no right to interfere with the signorina's amusement. But beware!" she added, with a cold glitter in her eyes—"Beware how you abuse my good nature! Good-night!" she said, rising, "I shall go in now! The signorina Thornton, I presume, unless she means to prolong her *tête-à-tête* with you, count, will accompany me." Rosa bowed to the count, and followed Helena.

Zanini watched them until their white dresses had disappeared, then drawing a deep breath, "She is as beautiful," he cried, "as the star-lit sky—I love her!" Then, turning, left the garden.

When the ladies had reached the main ante-chamber of the palace, Rosa took up her candle, and prepared to

go to her room, when, stopping suddenly, she flung her arms around the countess's neck.

"Do not speak to me, dear signora, as you did just now; it was dreadful!"

"I hate them all!" said Helena, her face darkening as she spoke.

"Then do not see him again! We will not drive with him!"

"No, you must have change of air and scene; I am not half so cruel as I seem; good-night!"

CHAPTER XVII.



ON the next Tuesday morning the sun rose in undimmed splendor. Rosa could not help looking forward with pleasure to the promised excursion to Peglie. At noon, a carriage—not the count's own—drew up before the door. His tact had suggested to him that a plain equipage would expose the ladies to less remark, and he had written a line to Helena, engaging to meet them at the Peglie Gardens, proceeding thither himself at an earlier hour to transact some business in that quarter. Helena understood very well what he meant, and felt grateful for the delicacy of his conduct. The ladies set off presently, Rosa little dreaming what the countess had done for her sake, in breaking away so completely from the normal routine of her life. Since the death of her husband, Helena had shut herself up from the world, and gone absolutely nowhere, never passing the palace gates, except at twilight, on some errand of mercy to the sick or poor.

The drive to Peglie proved very pleasant, the road winding along the shores of the Mediterranean, while on the other hand, orange groves, whose dark green foliage was now thick-studded with the golden fruit, girt palace and villa with their fragrant shade. The breeze was blowing soft from the south, and the sea breaking in long emerald ripples on the rocky shore. Helena and Rosa watched it in silence.

As the carriage drew up before the Peglie Palace, Zanini came forward to meet them, and assisting them from the coach, thanked them warmly for accepting his invitation.

"Thank you!" said Helena, in her deep tones, with a searching glance, as the count offered her his arm. Zanini understood her. He saw that she had recognized and approved the sacrifice he had made in allowing them to come alone, and his face beamed with pleasure.

They passed under the great portal into the Palavacini Garden. Before them, burnished by the sunlight, stretched forth in every direction paths of enameled green, hedged on either side by rose-trees. These wound around into an enchanting bower, which, thickly trellised with vines, completely shut out the sun's rays. Into this cool, shaded retreat our party entered, when suddenly, as if by magic, played on their heads the most delicate and fragrant of April showers, whose drops glistened like diamonds on the trembling leaves.

"It is raining!" cried Rosa, putting out her hand, "and there are lovely little rainbows all over the bower. How pretty!"

"I fear your dresses may be injured," said Zanini.

"Oh, no! It is so soft and sweet!" and even as she spoke the rain ceased.

"Is it the work of fairies?" said Rosa. "If one might imagine a shower in heaven, wetting the angels' wings, it would be like this!"

Zanini gave Rosa a look which made her turn away as he said, "It is far from difficult for me to imagine such a picture, having an instance before my eyes. Are there not two angels here?"

"Who, believe me, will make good use of their wings if you talk such nonsense, Zanini," said the countess.

She rose, and they followed her back through those serpentine paths, until they arrived at a beautiful porch which formed the entrance to a grotto. From the roof, countless stalactites depended in delicate spiral shapes, while below were columns and colonnades formed of the same crystals. These stalactites had, of course, been brought from a great distance; they had been arranged with artistic skill, and the water dripping through the limestone roof had begun to mingle with the lime, and create rival formations of its own. Helena had often to bend her stately head to pass under the numerous arches, and sometimes could not refuse the assistance of Zanini's hand. At such times it was his privilege to hold Rosa's hand also for an instant in his own. He would look down at it, and did not fail to see how small and beautiful it was.

As they emerged from the further end of this grotto, they came on a tiny lake, and floating swan-like on its breast, a graceful boat, painted white and gold. In the stern, waiting to receive them, stood the boatman, in his white blouse.

"If this is Charon," said Zanini, "he seems in a blithesome mood, as if expecting the spirits of the blessed. I wish he might ferry us to the happy isles."

They stepped into the barge, and were rowed by their cheerful Charon across the lake, which dimpled merrily in the sunlight, under the strokes of his gilt-tipped oars.

They glided beneath a suspension bridge, then wound along the shore under waving boughs, so close that Rosa put out her hand to grasp them as they passed. Land-

ing at a little pier of white marble, they bade their boatman farewell, and traversing a garden rich with variegated flowers, they came to a pavilion, where Victor Emmanuel's queen had once taken tea with the Countess of Palavacini. Dotted here and there about the garden, might be seen through the glass doors of this pavilion, statues of Flora and Pomona, holding forth tempting baskets of fruits and flowers.

"It is lovely as a dream!" exclaimed Rosa, "a dream one would never awake from!"

"Do you remember when I first had the honor of making your acquaintance?" said Zanini, addressing Helena, "Never, since then, have I ceased to associate this place with you. You were standing just there; the Countess Palavacini, I remember, was helping you to sherbet; Malaspina was near you, and turning to me, with a smile, he said, 'This is my wife, Zanini.'" Helena rose, and moved toward the door. Zanini turned to Rosa, "I thought her the loveliest woman," he continued, lowering his voice, "I had then seen. Poor Malaspina! He died young. It is natural she should mourn for him; he was a most engaging man! A little of a skeptic, perhaps, but a model of physical beauty. His features, to be sure, might have been thought effeminate, but his figure was superb. They could have called him, as they did Leonardo, the handsomest man of his time—poor Malaspina!"

At this moment the countess turned, and Rosa remarked that her face was deadly pale, and so rigid, that her lips seemed to move with difficulty, as she said—"Let us go on!" They left the pavilion, and, passing over the little bridge which spanned the lake, were again

overtaken in the middle of it by a soft shower. This seemed meant for their special benefit—for beyond, the sun shone unclouded, and no rain was to be seen.

“There are spirits here—I was sure of it!” said Rosa, “it rains, and it does not rain!”

“These,” said Zanini, “are called the garden jests; I was once here with a large party, when the same trick was played upon the queen.”

“Was she not annoyed at the damage done her dress?”

“Not at all! She was always very plainly attired. She merely laughed as you did just now, and put out her hand to feel the spray.”

“Was the queen beautiful?” asked Rosa.

“She was both good and fair—a combination,” said Zanini, laughing, “which we cold men of the south rate higher than mere beauty. Our sovereign,” he continued, “is famous for this sort of moralizing!”

“She was more fortunate than most women,” said Helena, gravely, “in that her broken heart brought with it death.”

“I learn, for the first time,” said Zanini, with a smile, “that a broken heart is a proof of happiness.”

“You misconstrue me; I said, when it brought death!”

“Poor creature!” pursued Zanini; “the king tortured her with his Countess of Millefiori. Had it been a veritable countess, the queen might have borne the slight, but it was indeed grievous to one of royal blood to find a rival in the daughter of a drum-major—a sort of vivandière.”

“Oh, the king!” said Helena, scornfully. “The king does not deserve we should waste our breath on him. I hate him!”

"You hate lightly, signora! The king is a gallant man—brave as a lion, and as true as steel!"

Her lips curled. "Let us talk no more of him!" she said.

"To hear, is to obey," said the count, and, with a low bow, led the way out of the garden.

In a restaurant, hard by, a table, spread for dinner, awaited them. It was garnished with fruits and flowers, and presented the most delicate viands. The wine was old, and gleamed like molten gold through the thin Venetian glass. After their long walk, all were sufficiently glad of refreshment. To Rosa's eyes, everything looked tempting, and even Helena could not but commend the exquisite taste which had presided over the repast. The moon had begun to silver the trees, when they left the table, and now the countess seemed less restless than she had been during the day, while Rosa was entirely happy. There was about Zanini the atmosphere of a true gentleman. He had, indeed, much good nature, brought into conspicuous play by the impulsive traits of the genuine Italian. His manners were vivacious, but reverential, and his dark eyes, when he addressed a woman, most expressive. Rosa was still very young, and it was not strange she should feel the subtle charm of Zanini's homage.

As he led them to their carriage, he said, still holding the door, with a look that was laughably piteous—"May I come in?"

"This is the second time, within a few days," said Helena, "that you have put up that petition. You know me—I am ferocious, but not implacable. I cannot refuse you—come in!"

Zanini sprang into the coach. By the moonlight that was now bathing the whole landscape, he might contrast the two beautiful women who sat before him. They were silent, and he seized the occasion to scrutinize their features. Both were pale, but the face of the countess seemed frozen by some great grief; she looked a copy of the "Inconsolable," and Rosa a sweet, rounded Proserpine. Zanini fancied, as he watched her there, her lap heaped with flowers, that she must have looked thus to gloomy Dis, when he found her playing in Enna, and gathered "herself a fairer flower." Rosa felt that his eyes were upon her, and could not raise her own, but the countess heeded him not, for her thoughts had wandered back to other days—days of mingled bliss and agony. She had forgotten where she was, and neither of the three broke the silence until the carriage drew up before the gate of the Doria Palace.

"Have we been asleep?" exclaimed Zanini, rubbing his eyes. "No, we have only dreamed. Good-night, and *au revoir*!"

"Good-night!" said Rosa to Helena, as they separated for the night, "I have had a delicious day!"

"Have you?" said Helena abstractedly. "I am glad if anything has made you happy. Good-night, Rosa!"

The countess had marked out the employment of Rosa's days for her. Our heroine breakfasted alone, and afterward retired to a tiny boudoir, where she read and pondered the rôles which Helena had selected as best suited to her. At two, the countess joined her, when Rosa would recite what she had learned, and sometimes hear from Helena's lips her own conception of the part. Helena had suggested a course of reading by which her

protégé could not fail to profit. If a particular *rôle* was founded upon fact, Rosa was recommended to look up everything in history, or poetry, which might, in any way, throw light on the characters, or their times. Thus, Alfieri's tragedies had introduced to her Plutarch's Lives; in order to comprehend *Pia dei Ptolomei*, she had pored over Sismondi's Republics, and in this way fresh knowledge was continually unrolled before her, causing her to thirst the more ardently for larger stores.

With the consciousness of self-improvement, Rosa's gratitude grew warmer every day, until she came to regard the countess as one of another sphere than earth; her genius, her loveliness, her generous protection and care, made her almost an object of worship to the young and ardent girl. On the other hand, Rosa's companionship was as grateful to Helena, as rain to the parched fields; she was the one oasis in a life which had been all desert. She bathed, so to speak, her way-worn heart in this fresh and buoyant nature. They always dined together, and afterwards would stroll forth into the gardens, while Rosa prattled to her friend of what she had read that day. At such times Helena would begin to listen with great attention, but presently her eyes would wander to the far horizon, while her spirit seemed communing with forms visible to her gaze alone. Then Rosa's voice would sink, her animation desert her, and she would rise and move away. When thus abandoned to her own thoughts, her favorite lounging place was the balustrade fringing the sea-wall, which fenced the garden from the sea. There she spent many an hour, hearkening to the rippling waves, and gazing into their soft depths. Not seldom of an evening Zanini would join

them, and propose a walk to Rosa, or, perhaps, a moonlight drive, and always something that might afford her change of scene ; thereupon, her fair face would lighten, and reward him with such a radiant smile, as but for Helena's presence had sent the count on his knees at her feet. And when, for some reason, he did not come, Rosa found the silent garden, and the twilight hour, more than ever lonely.

"Tell me," he said, one evening, as they stood apart from Helena, who sat rapt in one of her speechless reveries, "tell me something of yourself. Where did you blossom, whither will you go? You seem to me like a fresh creation, sprung from the hands of some Pygmalion !"

Rosa bit her lips, and paused a moment, as if meditating a reply. At length, she said, "I will tell you everything! You are a noble, steeped in the prejudices of your caste, and when you have heard my history, you will blush to know one like me ; but," she added, with affected *nonchalance*, "the story may amuse you, and you have been so kind to me, that I owe you something in return. Shall I begin, like a child's book, at the beginning? Well, then, I was born in the island of Sardinia—in very humble circumstances ; my mother is a peasant, she cannot read or write, or understand me if I speak of anything outside the narrow circle of her daily life. When she goes out, she wears a kerchief wound about her head, her feet are always bare. She is handsome still, one of those picturesque faces an artist would be glad to paint. My father," her voice fell, and her cheek grew a shade paler, "was different in all things. Like you, he was of noble birth—but not a native of

your country. When I was a child," she continued, "I would often run away from home, for I was not happy in our little hut. My mother had a fiery temper, and frightened me with her outbursts of rage. Once, I remember, when a letter she expected was not forthcoming, she rushed excitedly into the room where I was, and gathering up all our garments, tore them to tatters. To escape from such fits of anger I used to wander off to the woods that surrounded our dwelling, and, hiding there all day, make my dinner of berries, and drink the water of the brooks. I came to know all the birds in the forest; I used to talk with them, calling them my brothers, and they would answer me cheerily, bidding me not be lonely. At other times, I would stray down to the coast, and sit for hours, gazing into the fathomless ocean. What magic scenes I beheld in its glassy depths. In grottos of coral, fair mermaids danced and sang. They beckoned me to come to them, they decked me with shells and jewels of the sea; in my ears they hung great emerald drops, and crowned me their queen. Much I wondered, when I awoke from my pleasant dream, what had become of my sweet playfellows, and stretched forth my arms—to find them gone! But the next day, and the next, I was sure to meet them again.

"One day, dreaming thus, in a favorite nook, an old monk passed by the place where I sat. He asked what I was doing, and smiling gravely at my reply, showed me a missal, and bade me read from it. I told him I could not read; he promised to teach me. The next day he showed me how to spell my name, and after that he came every day, at the same hour. I learned so rapidly, that he presently gave me little stories of the

saints to read. These, he told me, were truthful pictures, while the water was a false mirror; that what I thought I saw there, the mermaidens, with their streaming hair and belts of pearl, were snares and delusions to cheat my soul.

“Suddenly his visits ceased. Many days I watched for his coming, but one evening, as I passed through a neighboring village, they told me the old monk was dead. I had now no friend. In my loneliness I went back to the sea shore, to find once more my old companions. But I called the mermaids in vain. They never came back to me. Yet, even now, there are times when I half believe that I roved with them beneath the waves, and that they played with me, and loved me.

“For some time I felt sad at my loneliness, but at length, I made a new acquaintance. In a pasture, near our cottage, were some horses; and sometimes, in the early morning, when no one was stirring, I ventured to approach and speak to them. Among them was one noble animal, so gentle, that he would let me stroke his glossy mane. I soon came to love him as a friend, and every morning would coax him, with a bit of sugar, up to the fence where I stood. Then I would clamber on his back, and away we sped across the fields. It was a rude school, count, but a good one, and I became at last so expert, that I could even ride him standing. Then, by way of amusement, I began to try various sorts of exercises. One day, as I was standing with crossed arms on the back of my docile horse, some unusual sound startled me, and losing my balance, I sprang with a scream to the ground. Peering over the fence, stood a strange man, with a great bushy beard. He called out

pleasantly enough, and bade me not be afraid; instinctively I clung to my horse's neck for protection. Presently he climbed over the fence, and coming up to me, asked where my mother lived, and bade me come with him to look for her. We found her working in the field. He went up to her, and I heard him tell her that he was the owner of a great circus; that he had come to Sardinia in search of horses; if she liked, he said, he would take me off her hands, and make a fine rider of me. My mother asked how much money he would give her; he offered five hundred francs down, and she—she sold me,” said Rosa, under her breath, “sold me for five hundred francs!

“The man was going to Genoa, and as my mother had learned, somehow, that my father was living there, she determined to accompany us. When we reached this city, we found, as he had said, a large circus stationed here, and I was put immediately in training. It was not long before I had learned everything my master required, and people flocked to see me in crowds, proclaiming me an infant prodigy.”

Rosa had told her tale thus far with downcast eyes—suddenly she raised them—she started—“Do not fix your eyes so steadfastly upon me!” she said. “You terrify me! You look like Macduff, when they brought him the evil news!”

“I feel like him. Go on!”

“I rode every evening; and every night—when all was over, I sobbed myself to sleep. I was so tired, and so very lonely!”

“Poor child, poor child!” murmured the count, between his closed teeth.

“Not finding my father, as she had hoped to do, my mother went back to Sardinia, and soon after, my master, whose name was Cinizelli, carried me to London, where I was placed in an equestrian school, under regular instruction. At the circus, where I continued to perform nightly, I remarked a gentleman who always occupied the same seat. One day, while I was alone at my lodgings, this gentleman entered. He questioned me most minutely about my birth-place, and my mother; then, bidding me reveal to no one who had visited me, withdrew, promising that to-morrow he would send me as beautiful a horse as ever walked the ring—That was my father! The next morning arrived a magnificent horse. The circus master laughed, and declared he knew where it came from—I said not a word. I never met, or talked with the English gentleman again. He did not miss a single performance. Generally, he was alone, but once he had a lady with him. She was very fair, and held by the hand a little golden-haired boy. I asked who the gentleman was; they told me—Lord Thornton! and that his constant patronage had been a great advantage to our circus, leading all the fashion of the town to visit us. By-and-by we left London, to try, by turns, Vienna, Berlin, and St. Petersburg, and finally, came back to Paris, where I remained until I went to New York.

“Living completely alone—when not on exhibition—I learned to think and act for myself. I read everything I could lay my hands on, and as I grew older, and more thoughtful, felt more and more keenly the degradation of my position, for the books I read revealed new worlds of thought and aspiration. I was a child, as I told you,

when they brought me to Genoa, but in childhood, perhaps, our memories are more tenacious than in later life. At any rate, I remember well the night—it was a Saturday, and our circus was closed—when they took me to see the then celebrated actress, Helena Ortelli, in *Phædre*! Her acting took complete possession of my imagination—from that hour I never ceased to dream. I had strange visions of things that were to be—of a larger, nobler career, that would yet be mine. Such visions grew and grew upon me, until, at length, aspiration became conviction, and I broke my bonds, came back to my native land, sought out the countess—and thenceforward my story tells itself—I am studying to be an actress, under her roof! How little I once dreamed that would ever be!—and she herself is preparing me for the stage.”

“When do you make your *début*?” asked the count, in great agitation.

“Next winter!—The countess thinks I shall then be fully prepared!”

“It cannot, it shall not be!” exclaimed the count, striding hastily away. Then coming back to where Rosa stood—“Do you not shrink from it?” he said, with violent emotion.

“It has been the dream of my life,” she answered—“the one hope that beaoned me on through the darkness that shrouded my youth!”

“What is there in such a career to attract you?” cried the count, vehemently. “Ah, yes! I forgot—admiration. You have grown up to the sound of vulgar applause, and you cannot live without it.”

“It is false!” said Rosa, with kindling eyes, “I have

never once missed it, in all this year of repose. I have never known what it was to long for it. As the crown of high endeavor, I should indeed desire applause, but I only loathed it when everything I did was hateful to me. My nature impels, and my heart prompts me to become an actress. Like Cleopatra," she added, smiling, "I have immortal longings in me!"

The count turned. "Good-evening," he said, coldly, "I must take my leave of you."

"Good evening!" said Rosa, looking up into his face—but her look met no answer there.

Forgetting even to bid the countess good-night, Zanini hurriedly left the garden, while poor Rosa stood rooted to the spot where she had uttered her last words. When, after some moments, she roused herself, she glanced around—The garden looked desolate without him.

Presently the countess rose—"It is late," she said, "and the air is chill. Come in, Rosa!—Where is the count?"

"He left us some time ago, signora!"

CHAPTER XVIII.



UCH rapid progress was made by Rosa in her studies, that Helena began to feel she could teach her nothing more. All she needed now was practice, and to have her courage tested by an appearance in public. What Helena most dreaded for her was an attack of stage fright, which she knew would be fatal to her career. But Rosa was not self-conscious, and Helena relied confidently upon that. "Have your part at your fingers' ends!" she would often impress on her young friend, "so that you might repeat it in your sleep, or in the heat of some tumultuous excitement breaking out all around you—Do this!—and for the rest, I fear not!"

Since he had heard Rosa's story, Count Zanini had ceased to visit the house. When she thought of him, as she did not seldom—"It is well," Rosa would say, with a bitter smile—"frankness is the crucible in which we test the loyalty of friends—Is it not true metal?—Let it go!" She remembered then Helena's words, "That love existed, perhaps, but never mutual." Was the countess right? It were better to die at once, than believe this!

"Zanini has gone to Rome!" Helena said, abruptly, one morning, as she and Rosa were sitting together. Glancing up a moment after, she saw fading from Rosa's

cheeks the color which had tinged them crimson, at the mention of Zanini's name.

"Do you know," continued Helena, "I have missed Zanini?—strange as such a confession sounds from my lips. Here is a letter from him! He is living in his Roman palace, he writes; sighing for something beyond its walls, to which, he fears, he will never attain. There is a message for you—shall I read it to you?"

"If you please, I would rather read it myself," Rosa said, with a blush. The countess handed her the letter, pointing to these lines—"Tell the Signorina Rosa, from me—it is better to make men wish to live, than to make them desire to die!" The blood rose in waves to Rosa's brow, as, holding the letter before her face, she read the words over and over.

"I do not understand what he means," said Helena, with a quiet smile; "he must take you, my dear, for a daughter of *Œdipus*, for he propounds riddles worthy of the Sphinx. His whole letter, indeed, is shrouded in oracular mystery. He quotes Hamlet's 'To be, or not to be'—to what purpose I know not. As for his last words, they are unintelligible—can you interpret them, Rosa?"

"Partly, and partly not!" she said, and turned away her head.

The countess understood the letter now. She was silent.

Rosa caught up her books, and went to her own room, where she remained until the hour of dinner.

That evening the countess gave Rosa another piece of news—"Salvini is in town," she said, "and is to act here for a few nights. I want him to see you; he must

see you—yet he may refuse my request, for he has never quite forgiven me. I will write him, and urge him to come here, if only for a moment. These actors, my dear, are wayward, arrogant beings! On the boards they sway so easily the emotions of a multitude, that they end by thinking the whole world must bow to them. Never be overbearing, Rosa! Remember always that the day of abdication must come for you also, when your charms will fade, and your power be gone. There is not a position in the world, I do believe, beset with greater temptations, than a successful actor's! There is a glamour around him, which dazzles and beguiles the eyes of men. In him they see the embodiment of the being he presents. To their mistaken glance, the actor moves on a different plane, to acquire a different experience from that of common mortals. Enjoying the incense of success, he dwells, as they imagine, in the fine atmosphere of high ideals, whereas, if they knew the truth, they would see little to envy in his calling. They do not comprehend that from the intensity of the emotions you portray, and the very law of that emotional nature which enables you to portray them, you are bound to feel and suffer a thousand-fold more keenly than others. Moreover, if you are a genuine artist, your life is one long struggle to compass an ideal perfection, which still eludes your grasp. It is a melancholy career, my Rosa; do not think to sleep on roses!"

Helena wrote to Salvini, and considerably to her surprise, within twenty-four hours received an answer. He would be, he said, at the orders of the countess on the succeeding day, at two o'clock. At the appointed hour he came. Helena was alone; Salvini seized her

hands on entering, and pressed them to his lip. "Then you have forgiven me!" she said.

"I must needs do so, for I have never found another like you!"

"I hear that the same triumphs, as of old, crown Salvini wherever he goes!"

"I cannot say that. I have learned too well—since I lost you—how the spirit dies out of acting, when you have no one to comprehend and respond to your exaltation. I do assure you, signora, since you left the stage I have never known what it was to feel my part. With me, now, as with so many others, everything is studied, premeditated; the old gush of spontaneity is gone; I came to you to-day, tremulous with hope that you might at last have repented—that you might yet—" he paused, and scanned curiously her face.

Helena returned his gaze. "You find me changed," she said. "You will never see me on the stage again. But I have a friend—a *protégée*—whom I have trained myself, and I have sent for you to ask for her the place which I should once have filled."

"Impossible!" said Salvini.

"No, it is not impossible. First, see her, and then judge. She is still very young—but, mark me, she will be great one day—greater than I could ever be. Salvini, I had already done my utmost, when I left the stage—but this girl will grow day by day. I will call her—Rosa!"

Rosa emerged from her little boudoir, hesitating a moment on the threshold. Salvini looked up, and could not restrain a cry of admiration. A gleam of triumph crossed Helena's face.

“Show Signor Salvini what you can do!” Helena said, in the commanding voice which had always chilled Rosa, from which she knew there was no appeal. “Give me your book! What is it?”

Rosa had been studying Francesca di Rimini. She handed the volume to Helena, and giving her one deprecating look, with flushed cheeks and lowered voice, began. As she proceeded, Salvini’s eyes kindled—then were riveted upon her face. “Gran Dio!” he exclaimed—“Gran Dio! Brava!” he cried again, for the young creature had forgotten herself completely in her part. Finally, when she reached the death scene, the actor sprang to his feet, and with fervent admiration he offered his hand to lift her from the floor; then, turning to the countess, declared, “She shall act with me I have seen nothing like this for years;—not since 1858, when you and I played the tragedy at Milan. Do you remember?”

“I do!” said Helena, dryly. “It is enough. I have conquered through another, but I prize the triumph as if it were my own. Rosa, you can go to your boudoir, if you like!”

With a bow to the visitor, Rosa withdrew, leaving the countess to discuss with Salvini when and where her *début* should take place. Helena engaged on her part that Rosa should remain in complete retirement until the moment of her appearance in public. With the suggestion of other necessary measures, Salvini took his leave.

Soon after the actor’s departure, Helena passed into Rosa’s boudoir. Since her recitation Rosa had nervously paced the room, listening for Salvini’s retreating steps,

and burning to hear from the countess's lips his final decision. At length, in despair at what seemed a most protracted, but was in fact a brief interview, she had flung herself down on an ottoman; when lo! Helena, who had come in very quietly, stood by her friend's side. Rosa started: the countess's face was flushed—yes, for the first time there was a lively color in her cheeks—and her eyes gleamed like stars.

"It is decided!" she said hurriedly. "Everything is settled. You are to appear in the middle of January, and you are to play Francesca. I chose the *rôle* for you, not because I greatly fancy it, but because it is such a favorite with a popular audience. Ah, well I remember how I pondered that part when it was my task to act it. It seemed to me that Silvio Pelico had diminished in some degree the interest and sympathy which attached to Francesca, by making her doubly disloyal—false to Paolo, no less than Lancelot! At one moment she clings to her husband, in the next embraces her lover. Such weakness may be possible—even natural—but certainly such natures are unworthy the attention of art. At the close, however, the heroine goes far toward redeeming herself, when she bids Paolo hope nothing from her husband's death, since even in eternity she will wear her widow's bonds. Eternity!" Helena's voice choked suddenly. "Through all eternity? That is long!" She stared wildly around her, until Rosa, terrified, said softly, "Signora!—Signora Contessa!" The countess looked at her, shuddered convulsively, then proceeded in more natural tones. "Still the rhythmic melody and the poetical diction of that play are genuine merits, while the two brothers, so happily

contrasted—Paolo, instinct with the indomitable fire of youth, and Lancelot bowed down with a broken heart—with Francesca the winning object of both their loves—compose a picture that must always interest the world. Most people never stop to analyze their sensations; they perceive only what hits the senses, and if they are moved, are satisfied. The *rôle* is good enough, my Rosa, but you must be perfect in it, and perfect I am sure you will be! You looked it, and spoke it so well this morning! Ah!” she continued in a subdued voice, “Salvini forgot the actress he once admired, and saw only you. As I told you, you will erase what is left of my memory. They will say no longer, ‘None can play Francesca since Helena Ortelli is gone!’”

“They shall say it still!” cried Rosa, “I will not take the part!”

“I have chosen the play for you,” said Helena, firmly, “and Francesca it shall be!”

“It shall be what you wish,” said Rosa.

Amid new plans and scenes the Italian girl had not forgotten New York. Not seldom the recollection of her life there returned with lively force, and at times so pressed upon her mind, that, turn where she would, she could not free herself from the shadow of the past. To-day in particular such memories beset and overpowered her. Why should they do so? She was no longer the Rosa of other days, no longer the poor apprentice to an humble—almost a degraded—calling! If the countess chose, she might at any moment launch her *protégée* in the highest society, for she had made of Rosa an inti-

mate friend, and Helena herself, through her marriage and her own splendid fame, had achieved no mean position in distinguished circles. Now, moreover, that Salvini, the idol and arbiter of the Italian stage, had tested and approved her, Rosa felt with reason that a seal had been set upon her talents. The great actor had engaged her for his theatre—that meant she was no more the slave of circumstances dependent on an uncertain future, but assured of self-support—the mistress of her own destiny. The girl's heart throbbed to think how far that destiny was changed already!—surrounded as she was with every refinement, shut in and guarded from contact with the vulgar world! Far off—far off, seemed now the friendless circus-rider whom people thought it discreditable to know. Discreditable!—all had not thought so. Mary Marlboro had been kind, and Rosa had promised—it crossed her mind to-day for the first time—to let her know where she decided to live in Europe. She would write at once—she had acquired the right to address Miss Marlboro, and that no longer as an inferior, grateful for recognition, but on a footing of equality, as one acquaintance to another interested possibly in her future. Amid thoughts like these it was not likely that Mr. Livingstone would be forgotten. But did he still remember, she wondered, the young girl to whom he had been so kind—she paused—and so cruel? Absorbed in such reminiscences she sat down to her desk, and wrote:

“DEAR MISS MARLBORO:

“You will doubtless be surprised to receive a letter from a place so distant, and in an unknown hand, but

I trust, when you have glanced at the signature you will recall to memory one to whom you once showed kindness, which she on her part has never forgotten. I am now living, for a time, at Genoa. I dare say you have visited the city. If you have, you must surely remember the old Palazzo Doria, for it is an object of much interest to strangers. There is one apartment in the palace which is let, and is rented at present by the Contessa Malaspina. She is the lady with whom I live. Helena Ortelli—that was her maiden name—was once a celebrated actress, who married in the bloom of youth Count Malaspina, and soon afterward retired from the stage. She is the most beautiful woman—and the most interesting—I have ever seen. She reminds me always of a grand but broken statue—the missing fragment is, I fear, her earthly happiness. She never speaks of her husband, and I suspect that her soul broods over some hidden sorrow. It is she, my benefactress, who has made me what I am; I came to her friendless, and she took me in!—a novice, and she taught me to be an artist! For the last eighteen months I have been studying, under her guidance, for the stage. Yesterday, Salvini, the first of our Italian actors, saw me, and regularly engaged me for next winter—oh, if only for her sake, I should be so happy, so grateful, for success. You will think me a great egotist to write so much about myself, but the recollection of your former kindness encouraged me to run on. But now tell me something of yourself. What have you been doing in this long interval? Are you never coming to Europe?—and shall I meet you, if you do? I assure you, my dear Miss Marlboro, my heart often dwells on the hour

when we said good-by. I never recall your face without affection, and your sweet voice, raised in song—as I heard it that last evening—rings still in my ears! Are you going on with your music and your painting? I am sure you have great talents in both ways. Remember me to your sister—and your friend. You may think my letter tardy—but I waited till I had something of real moment to communicate. Believe me, I have often sat in Andrea Doria's garden, gazing out over the moon-lit sea, and casting in it little tokens of good will, bade them drift toward America and you. Did they never find their way to your feet? If you answer speedily, I shall take it a great kindness. Address me—Care of La Signora Contessa Malaspina, Palazzo Doria, Genoa, and believe me, dear Miss Marlboro, with the warmest recollection of your kindness,

“Ever yours sincerely,

“ROSA THORNTON.

“P. S.—I enclose my photograph.”

With a degree of trepidation, for which our heroine would have found it difficult to assign a reason, the above missive was directed and despatched.

CHAPTER XIX.



WHILE the epistle recited in our last chapter is on its way to Miss Mary Marlboro, let us renew our acquaintance with that young lady. Has the current of her days flowed smoothly since we met her last? The first six months had brought no outward change to any of Mr. Elliot's household. Mary's devotion to painting had not wavered, while some of her time had been given to music, and society. But Miss Marlboro was not happy. There had come over her a strange restlessness which, at times, she had found it hard to dispel. In such moods she would linger long before her canvas, brush in hand, without making a stroke. Mrs. Elliot had not failed to notice the fitfulness of her sister's demeanor, but to her she did not like to speak of it, and she would not betray to Henry what all loyal women have ever deemed a sacred secret. Mr. Livingstone was a frequent visitor, and it was apparent that, with every visit, Mary's restlessness increased. At length, one morning, while the two were seated in Mary's room, the man-servant, coming to the door, announced that Mr. Livingstone wished to see Miss Marlboro. It was an unusual hour for a gentleman to call, and Mrs. Elliot, looking up, saw the color deepen on her sister's cheek. Turning quickly, to avoid Cecilia's eye, Mary hurried from the room, but returned in a few moments

to say, hastily—"Mr. Livingstone has come to take me to his mother; she is very ill, and has asked repeatedly for me. I may not be back to dinner, Cecilia!" Dressing herself hurriedly, she said good-by, and as they kissed, her sister saw that her eyes were full of tears.

All that day Mary was absent, and in the evening came a line to tell Cecilia that Mrs. Livingstone was dangerously ill, would take nothing from any hand but Mary's, and as she was quiet only when Mary was at her side, the latter could not leave her.

The lady whose illness occasioned so much solicitude had been an early friend and schoolmate of Miss Marlboro's mother. The intimacy had continued after marriage; and since Mrs. Marlboro's death, her daughters had been objects of the tenderest interest to Mrs. Livingstone. From childhood, however, Mary had been her favorite, and had grown more and more dear to her with advancing years. Mary had inherited a considerable fortune, was handsome, and uncommonly clever, and altogether, although Mrs. Livingstone was a proud and worldly woman, who had centred her hopes and affections upon her only son, such a match might well satisfy both her ambition and her heart. She had often told Ernest that Mary Marlboro was the only girl she knew, whom she could welcome as a daughter to her home, and it had often weighed heavily on her heart to see that he did not respond to her desire. She knew, however, that he saw more of her favorite than of any one else, and evinced a decided liking for her society, and she surmised, from the truant way in which Mary's color came and went, when Ernest was present, that the young lady was far from being indifferent to her son. Yet,

month after month passed by, and no engagement was announced between them.

In the midst of these projects for her son's happiness, Mrs. Livingstone fell suddenly ill. There seemed, at first, no cause for particular anxiety, but the disease developed rapidly, her symptoms became every day more serious, until at length Ernest dared not absent himself for a moment from his mother's bedside.

"Mother!" he said, one day, when her fever was high, and she seemed more than commonly restless, "Mother!" he said, bending over her couch, "have you anything on your mind—that disturbs you? You fasten your eyes upon me as if there were something you wished to say. Tell me what is on your mind, dear mother!"

Mrs. Livingstone pressed the hand of her son. "I wish," she whispered, "that I might see Mary Marlboro. Do you think she would like to come and sit with me now?—Oh, Ernest! if I could feel sure of your happiness on earth, I could die more willingly."

"Do not fret, dear, about me!" he said, in a low voice; "I am happy enough as I am!"

Mrs. Livingstone turned her head, and was silent for some moments. Then she said—"I wish she were here! It would do me good to see her sweet face!"

"Shall I go for her, mother?"

"I wish you would!"

Mary now became a constant attendant on the dying bed of Ernest's mother. "Do not leave me!—either of you!" the sufferer would say, plaintively, "I feel easier when you are both there!" Not seldom, during the long hours which they passed at her bedside, she would turn from one to the other with a feverish glance of

inquiry on her face, and if Mary rose to leave the room for an instant, made her promise to return presently. "It is so lonely," she moaned, "so lonely, to be without a daughter."

"You are tired!" said Mr. Livingstone, in a whisper to Mary one afternoon. "You are very pale—you need rest! Go and lie down!—I will call you when my mother wakes!"

"No," said Mary, looking earnestly in his face, "I must not go. The doctor said she was too ill now to be left alone a moment. I thought he looked troubled when he went away; he charged me to watch her narrowly, and if I saw the least change in her symptoms, to send for him at once."

Just then, Mrs. Livingstone turned, and breathed uneasily. Mary rose and put her hand on the sufferer's brow. Ernest had gone toward the door—Mary motioned him to draw near. "There are cold drops on her forehead," she said; "send for the doctor!—Do not leave me alone!" she added, hurriedly. Ernest bent over his mother. She had lifted her head, and opening her eyes, fixed them, with a vacant stare, on the faces of her two attendants. Gradually her mind seemed to recover consciousness, and, gasping for breath, she tried to raise herself in the bed. Mary held her up, presently she breathed more freely. "I am dying," she said, "dying, my children! Give me your hands!" She put Mary's hand in her son's, and holding them both in hers, said, "Be everything, one to the other! It was my living—it is my dying wish!—Love one another!" She sank back, and her eyes closed. There was no longer any movement. The hand that yet clasped theirs was growing cold

"She is dead!" said Ernest.

They sat long thus in the deepening gloom of that chamber. The dead hand, alas, had relaxed its grasp now, and dropped nerveless on the bed, but the hands of Mary and Ernest were clasped still, as if loth to separate what the last thought of that vanished soul would have joined together.

When Ernest, in the evening, walked with Mary to her home—not a word of love was said, but each felt that a bond had been made that day which was not to be broken.

Two days later Mary followed with Ernest his mother's body to its grave in Greenwood Cemetery. But the tension of her nerves during her protracted watching and anxiety had been excessive, and she was now herself prostrated with fever. Many times in every day Ernest called to learn how Mary was, but always Mrs. Elliot met him with the same answer, "Her sister was only half-conscious, but on the tenth day the doctor hoped there might be a change for the better." The tenth day came, and Mary was pronounced decidedly improved, and soon afterward when Mr. Livingstone called he was informed that she was sitting up, and had sent word, that if he came, she should like to see him.

On entering the room he was startled at the sight of her pale sunken face. "Mary!" he exclaimed. She held out her hand, and he pressed it to his lips. There was a silence of some moments, while Ernest kept her hand still clasped in his.

"Mary, do you love me?" he said—his voice was almost inaudible.

"I do!" she murmured, as she covered her face with her hands.

"And will you be to me what my mother wished?—my wife?"

"I love you!" she whispered.

"And I love you!" he said.

That day, after Ernest had gone, when Cecilia came to Mary's sitting-room, one look in her sister's face told all. "Are you happy, dear?" she said, as she bent over her.

"Perfectly!" said Mary, looking up with radiant eyes. "I am blessed beyond my dreams."

So Ernest and Mary were engaged. The gay world discussed the event, as it is prone to do, and opinions varied with the point of view. Mothers of marriageable daughters marveled greatly, and declared Miss Marlboro was too old, and by no means handsome enough for Mr. Livingstone; the young girls were unanimous that Mary must be congratulated, while the young men pronounced her a charming woman, and Livingstone a most fortunate fellow.

"Are you not well?" Mary said to him one evening, some months after Mrs. Livingstone's death. It was twilight, and they were seated together in the library. It was an hour Mary loved.

"Yes, I am well!" he said abstractedly. The hand which lay on his shoulder trembled. He drew it in his own and kissed it.

"But you are sad, Ernest!" she continued. "You are often sad of late!"

"Am I?" he answered dreamily, as if he had only half heard her. Then rousing himself, "Perhaps

since my mother's death I have not seemed so cheerful as I once was. I know it is 'common,' as we read the other day, and that 'all who live must die, passing through nature to eternity,'—yet the tie between a mother and a son is close."

"Dear Ernest, I grieve with and for you!" said Mary, earnestly.

"I know it, Mary!"

"This is a sweet hour!" she said. "At such a time of all others—could we believe with the Spiritualists, one would wish to see and hold communion with friends that have passed away. Do you know, Ernest, I almost regret that their claims are not sustained, for at times my faith wavers, and I cannot look forward with the old confidence to a life hereafter. And after all, on what grounds can we be asked to believe it? Life vanishes in a moment, and we lay the beloved in the dull earth. Could we go back, and find them gone, as the disciples did in the garden—it would be different; but when we seek them they are still there—only fearfully changed. In all else we rely on our senses, but here we are bidden to trust in what is neither visible nor tangible—and that is faith!"

"Yes," he answered, "and a sublime faith! Without it we should wander like shadows over the earth, restless, purposeless—without a beacon, or a conscience! Yet even for those who do not believe in immortality I cannot think death an evil. Were it not for that certain goal to which one and all are hastening, I imagine this burden of existence would become so insupportable that men would go mad, or combine in universal suicide; in which event," he added, "the world would only rehearse

on a colossal scale one of Shakspeare's tragedies, where all die on the stage at once."

"Life is so beautiful to me!" said Mary in a low voice, "it pains me to hear you speak of it thus."

"The truth ought not to pain you. I did not speak lightly; I have pondered the question patiently—humbly—and I have come to this. There is a terrible foe to the human race—more deadly than death—which creeps with the years upon us, to wind his stifling coils about the soul. That foe is *ennui*! I do not use the word in the sense which every jaded worldling and baffled trifler gives it. I mean that palling even of mild delights upon the senses; that fatigue which loads the wing of the traveled fancy; that dreary question: What shall I do next?—and is it worth doing?—and worst of all, the woeful discovery of the uncertainty and inadequacy inherent in human knowledge—that discovery which Faust said would burn out his heart!"

"Work is the great remedy!" said Mary.

"No, even work is powerless against *ennui*! The daily routine of life, rising, sleeping, and toil, becomes irksome in the end!"

Mary's pulses throbbed fast—"Does loving likewise pall at last?" she whispered.

"So sad a truth must have one exception," he answered.

"Ernest, do you see that tiny, bright star above us? That is the evening star—the star of love. She looks down with a reproachful eye, and has veiled somewhat of her lustre, since you began to question her power."

"I will tell you," he said, smiling, "a story of love, which I read years ago. Once upon a time lived

an ardent youth, who, like the holy Thomas à Kempis, was 'in love with loving;' but, unlike the saint, thirsted not for God, but for a goddess. Through all the world he journeyed in quest of the lady of his dream, but the further he fared, the heavier grew his heart, until at last, weary and hopeless, he chanced to enter the Tribune at Florence. Casting his eyes languidly around him, they fell on the Venus de Medici. A single glance sufficed—his wanderings were over—his goddess found. With a cry of rapture he flung himself at her feet, and bathed them with his tears. Day and night he sat entranced before her, drinking in her perfect loveliness. But by and by his heart began to ache again—the marble touch of the sculptured goddess chilled him, and he went forth disconsolate to seek another object for his love. One day, as he sauntered listlessly through the Palace of the Louvre, he caught the eyes of the Lady of Milo fixed earnestly upon his face. His heart bounded in ecstacy; he sank on his knees before her, and kissed the ground pressed by her feet. 'I have sought thee for years,' he cried. 'In thee I find my ideal! True nobility and loftiness of thought are written on thy pure brow. Thee I worship, and thee only!' Time passed—and the old restlessness crept back upon his heart. In vain he strove to quiet it, for reason whispered, 'High and noble she is—but she lifts not thee to the plane she dwells on. She is self-poised—self-centred, and wanting sympathy with others, may kindle no vital spark.' 'I must shake off my lethargy, and leave the goddess to her immortal calm. Farewell!' he said, and went out a lonely man. In the Vatican at Rome, whither he had

hastened to wash away his sins, he came face to face with Psyche. He loved her in that moment, and she loved him; but alas! they dwelt not long together before he recognized with a groan that she, too, failed to satisfy his longing. 'Oh, God!' he cried, in accents of despair, 'I have bowed to beauty in the flesh, and in the intellect—and forsaken both for beauty of the soul! Where now shall I look to solve the mystery which weighs upon my heart?' Mournfully parting from Psyche, he fared onward with hopeless eyes. Bending at last his steps to colder climes, he came northward to Britain, where on a certain day he entered the Abbey at Westminster. As the worn pilgrim of love strayed through its vaulted chapels—rose before him the figure of Death. He bowed his head. 'We have met at last!' he murmured. 'Dreams of my youth, ye vanish! Your empire ceases with this mortal life, and thy hand, great Death, shall unravel the mysteries of existence; I yield to thee!'"

"It is a fearful tale," said Mary, shuddering. "Do not tell me that you read it, Ernest!"

"It is founded," he said, "on the legend attaching to the veiled figure at Sais—do you not remember that? And is not truth indeed the ideal of us all? And we must die in the quest—we never find it, save in death."

"He is changed of late!" Mary murmured to herself that evening after her lover had left her. "He is not as he used to be! I see it too plainly. Alas, if happiness be the aim of life, I am not like to gain it here. But a few months ago the earth looked so bright to me—I hardly felt the touch of care—and now—and now!" She wrung her hands, and broke forth in sobs—"Cruel

Ernest—if it was a delusion—why—why did you lift the veil? No, he does not look at me as I sometimes think a lover should! He does not—” Here her burning face was buried in her hands. “I love him,” she went on, “so utterly! I have never had one dream of life, save of living with him—for him! I think he loves me—but how much? I am jealous of his dreams!”

It was but a few days after this conversation with Mr. Livingstone that Mary received a foreign letter. The handwriting was strange to her, and the postmark was “Genoa,” which gave no clew whatever. With not a little curiosity she broke the seal, and drawing out a photograph, scrutinized the features in much perplexity. Suddenly she uttered an exclamation of surprise: “Yes, it is she!—the little circus-rider. The same earnest, interesting face! the same fiery glances masked by those sweeping lashes! The same sweet curves about the lips!” She opened the letter quickly, and was soon so much absorbed in its perusal, that she did not hear Ernest, who had entered, and was now standing just behind. At a light touch upon her shoulder she started, and with a blush held out Rosa’s photograph. “See if your memory is better than mine!” she said. He took it from her. Mary watched his face as he bent over the picture, and she thought Ernest had never looked at once so handsome and so pale, as he looked then.

“Beautiful!” he said. “It is an ideal head!”

“Yes,” said Mary, smiling sadly. “An ideal that may be attained on earth, without the terrible necessity of death on its realization! You have not guessed, then, who it is! Shame on such a faithless memory!”

“I knew it at the first glance,” he said; “she has

matured! The child has vanished from her face—the woman is more beautiful! So she is going on the stage!” he said, musingly. “Who would have dreamed it?”

“I would,” said Mary, bravely. “The first night we saw her, I recognized genius in her face!” Mr. Livingstone looked up. He was struck with the expression in Mary’s eyes—and, indeed, they were the very mirrors of truthfulness. He drew her to him, and folded her in his arms.

“Are you happy?” he said, tenderly.

“Perfectly!” she answered; and in her voice there was so much faith—such self-surrender—that her lover felt a twinge of remorse. It dawned on him dimly that he might not have rated his betrothed at her just value. Rarely will men pause to decipher the heart that is wholly theirs.

“Shall we go to Europe one day—you and I, Ernest? Would it not be charming to come on her by chance? Stopping, perhaps, toward evening, at some Italian inn, and demanding what amusements the town offered, to be told by the landlord of the great new actress, the Signorina Thornton?” She looked up in his face for a response. “I think she will become famous—our little *protégée*! Oh, I do hope for her success! How pleasant to think that both of us may claim her in some sort for our own.”

“Your claim,” said Ernest, “would doubtless be allowed; but I fear I should have none—I find no mention of myself in this letter.”

“Are you not the friend?” said Mary, laughing. “Read this sentence—‘Remember me to your sister, and

your friend!’ Friend—that was what Irma called her king. Lovers, you know, are common ; but a friend is rare indeed ! And is it not, after all, the larger word ? A friend may give his own life to prolong another’s—a lover is too much in love with loving to do that ! You shall not quarrel with the epithet !”

“I only quarrel with your definition.”

“Do not let us quarrel about anything !” she said, pressing her hands over his eyes.

“Who could quarrel with you ?” he said, in warmer tones than he had ever used. From her face beamed such purity and goodness, that his heart was touched ; yet, while he spoke, rose between them the vision of another face, younger, fairer, and he trembled, for his dead mother seemed to slip Mary’s hand in his.

“Mary,” he said, after a long pause, “I do not think I am worthy of your love. I know well how noble and true you are, and often, in your presence, I am burthened with a sense of my own unworthiness.”

“It is you, Ernest, who are true and noble. I know you thoroughly—and I know, also,” she said, with quivering lips, “that you do not love me—not, I mean, as I do you ! Dearest, let us speak openly to one another ! I am sometimes haunted with the fear that—that you did it all—for your mother’s sake !”

“I love you !” he said, earnestly.

“I am sure you love me,” she answered ; “I never doubted that ; but not with the love I have for you !”

“I am incapable, perhaps, of such unselfish affection. That is what I mean, when I speak of my unworthiness—but you, sweet—you are the divine Mary !” Ernest spoke with genuine emotion.

These were loving words, and Mary was satisfied for a little while; but ever and again she missed something of a lover's tenderness in their daily converse, and felt instinctively that Ernest should have been more devoted than he was. Not that he was cold to her. By a thousand kind attentions he sought to make good what he knew was wanting in his affection, and it was the intuition of this which stung her. Her own heart beat so wildly when she heard his step—did his beat thus? she wondered. She grew at length morbidly watchful of his smallest actions, and her jealous mind became so painfully sensitive, that she would ponder a note of Ernest's for hours, weighing every word and syllable. Were these the expressions, she would ask herself, of a passionate lover? Was this the outpouring of a heart replete with love? Had she written him in the spirit of her affection, she could not have said enough. She would have printed her soul upon the page, and told him that she worshiped him. But she dared not—such confessions must be mutual, if uttered at all! If his language was temperate, it became her to make her so too. Not that she could fancy him coolly meting out his words, but in his most fervent expressions, she felt that he held back something which was not hers. Sometimes, when she looked into his eyes, she seemed to perceive depths there which she could not penetrate.

Moreover, he was always serious now. How she longed to hear him laugh! He would be gay, surely, if he were happy—and what on this earth could make one happy, if not love, and the knowledge that you are loved in return? His mother was dead—true! But surely God never intended a mother's loss should sadden one's whole

life. Such a sorrow well might soften, but need not subdue his spirit! Six months had passed, yet there seemed no room for gladness in his heart.

It was in the midst of such a train of thought that Rosa's letter—still unanswered—recurred to Miss Marlboro's mind. Two months had passed since she received it—two months of constant agitation, during which she had had little time to think of anything save the perplexities of her own heart. Suddenly she roused herself. "Am I never again," she asked herself, "to do anything for myself, or others? For months I have utterly neglected my painting, my music and my books. Am I to mope my life away, because of a foolish apprehension, which has, perhaps, no foundation in fact. Am I not betrothed to Ernest? Am I not to be his wife? Is he not mine—all mine? Does he not tell me that he loves me; and is not that enough? One year ago, had I been promised so much, I should have been half-wild with joy! I believe I am fast becoming an hypochondriac. I will break up this wretched habit of self-absorption—and the first step shall be to write to Rosa Thornton." At once Miss Marlboro caught up her pen—as if in fear that her resolution might waver—and wrote as follows:

"DEAR MISS THORNTON:

"I cannot well express to you the pleasure that the reception of your letter and photograph gave me. The latter was lovely—'an ideal head' it was pronounced to be by one who took it from my hands to admire it with me. Can you guess who it was? If not now at the beginning, at the end of my letter you will read my riddle. I should have replied to your letter at once, but

of late I have not been very well. I was deeply interested in the account of your new life. Not that it surprised me, for I had looked into your face and read more deeply there than perhaps you will believe. I wish you, from the bottom of my heart, a great success, and such, I am confident, will be yours! Nothing would delight me more than to be present at your *début*, although I fear my reputation as a discreet young lady might suffer, for I should be sure to clap my hands with all my might, shout '*Bis*,' or be guilty of some other extravagance. I see you often in fancy, wandering in the old Palazzo Garden, which I remember well. And sometimes by your side I fancy I see a dark form, whose deep, Italian eyes are resting on your own. Am I right?—Of course I am!

"Your description of Madame Malaspina was very interesting. I regret exceedingly to say that we missed seeing her in Italy, arriving in every town—by some unlucky accident—just too late. She had, I believe, a European reputation, and I still recall our disappointment. To me, good acting imparts the keenest pleasure, but what rapture must it be to an actor to hold, if only for an hour, a whole audience enchained! Who knows but I may yet come to Italy, and witness your first appearance! You need not watch for me—we shall be sure to look you up. *We!*—my pen has betrayed me. A secret that burns, will out, they say. Shall I tell you mine? I am engaged to Mr. Livingstone. He was quite hurt that you did not mention his name in your letter, but I calmed his wounded vanity with the assurance that 'your friend' meant him—whom else? I was not mistaken, was I? My sister begs me to give you her

kind remembrance—‘Tell her,’ she says, ‘that I am taking some care of her little Italian friends at the Orphan School,’—and I will add what her modesty withholds, that she devotes a great part of her time to them, having become, in fact, a pillar of the school. I know you will be glad to hear that she has a dear little boy of her own—the sweetest baby in the world its doting aunty thinks.

“Mr. Livingstone joins me in sending you a cordial greeting. Hoping to hear soon from you again.

“I am, always, your sincere friend,

“MARY MARLBORO.”

That evening, when Mr. Livingstone was with Mary, she said to him, “I took the liberty, to-day, of sending a message for you to a beautiful lady—was I right?”

“You are always right,” he answered, smiling.

“I would prefer, perhaps, to hear you say I did wrong. Are you not curious to know to whom I sent your love?”

“Ah, that word changes the aspect of the matter. My love, no one but myself can give.”

“On the contrary, they who own a thing may give it away. What you, for instance, have given me, is no longer yours, and if I choose to part with it, I can.”

“Of every other gift but love,” said Mr. Livingstone, “this may be true, materially, if not morally. But love is not assignable. It is a relation, not an emanation. It is with love as with the rays of the sun; it is true that they descend to you in direct transmission from it, but once divide them from the sun, and they no longer exist.”

"I do not know," she said, musingly, "whether I like your definition. Suppose I sent your love to Miss Thornton, would you like it?"

Ernest started. "I do not think you did that," he said.

"Yes, I did; I sent my own love, and yours bound up with it."

Ernest rose, walked the room for a few moments, then went quietly to the table, and took up a book. "Have you gone out to-day?" he said.

"No, Ernest!—But, tell me, do you really know me so well, and yet imagine I could do such a thing? I was only jesting. I merely said that you joined me in kind remembrances to her."

"You told her of our engagement, I hope?" he asked, quietly.

"Yes, I did! I am sure she will be glad to hear of it."

"Why should she be glad?"

"Because she has a warm, generous heart, and as I should be glad of any happiness that came to her, so she will rejoice in mine."

"And are you happy?" he asked, with an earnest glance.

"You know I am!"

"Once before, when I put that question, you answered, 'Perfectly happy.' Are you so now?"

Mary's cheeks flushed. She turned away.

"Tell me," he pursued, gently, "are you not as happy as you were then?"

"I should be," she answered, in a tremulous voice, "if I knew that you were. Are you happy, Ernest?"

"I am as happy as I wish to be; that, you know, is saying everything."

Mary made no reply. "It is growing dark," she said, at length. "Shall I ring, and have the gas lighted?"

"Oh, no; let us remain as we are. There is a peculiar charm in this twilight hour. Mary, I have something to say to you—something that lies near my heart. Tell me, when shall our marriage take place? I have to go away—probably for a month—on business. When I return, need we postpone it any longer? I have never liked a long engagement. Long ago—but for my mother's death—I should have urged you with impatience to become my wife."

"Had it not been for his mother's death," thought Mary, bitterly, "our engagement would never have existed at all." But she did not speak. He took her hand; it trembled.

"Tell me, dear Mary; when shall it be?"

"Why need you go away for a month, Ernest? I shall be so lonely without you!"

"I must go. There is some very important business to be attended to—connected with my mother's estate. I received to-day a pressing letter, which will call me away in the beginning of next week."

"So soon! Where are you going?"

"To Chicago!"

"So far?"

Ernest smiled. "What would you say if I had to go to Europe? From the queen city of the West I can send you a letter every day, and a telegram every hour."

"So you might from Europe!"

"Yes, but you would not receive them so soon, and, therefore, I should not feel so near. But you have not

yet answered my question; you have not named the day, Mary!"

"Wait till you come home!"

"Will you promise to decide then—and that your decision shall immediately follow my return?"

"I promise."

They sat long in silence, hand in hand, through the dusky twilight. Ernest could not see the tears that dimmed Mary's eyes. "Good-night," he said, and as he folded her in his arms, he whispered, "You will soon be my wife."

"Never!" said Mary, as he closed the door. "He does not love me!" And she threw herself down in his chair, and sobbed aloud.

But the next day, Ernest came, and looked and spoke more gently than ever, till her heart was at peace again—at peace for a few short hours. When he had gone, and the impression of his manner and voice had faded, the inward strife would begin anew, the old doubts and fears awaken, and her anxious heart traverse wearily the same ground, scrutinizing his words, his accents, his gestures, his looks.

But she was soon to be his wife. As yet she stood only on the threshold. When she had fairly entered on her new life, would she not be happier? At present she was tossing on the waves of uncertainty and doubt, but marriage would prove a haven of repose. "In a month," he had said. "Oh!" she cried, "let it pass quickly! for I need to be at rest!"

CHAPTER XX.



FEW days after the evening when Ernest had begged Mary to name the marriage day, he was on his way to Chicago, and Mary was alone. How dreary everything had grown. Those twilight hours which were wont to be so sweet were insufferable now. The days, it seemed, would never pass, and the nights were longer still.

Mr. Livingstone wrote very often, and his letters were affectionate and kind, but to Mary they brought small comfort. He spoke joyfully, it is true, of their approaching marriage. He missed her, he said, and longed to return to her. He found the Western city dull, and wished she were with him there. Never, he declared, would he go away without her again.

With all this, something was wanting in his letters—something which she felt instinctively should have been there; and the want made her heart sink. His words were pleasant to hear, but they were cold words. They breathed no ardent longings, no passionate desire of her presence.

Every day the conviction of this deficiency pressed more and more heavily upon her mind. She grew pale and silent, until the change in her appearance attracted Cecilia's notice, and awakened her anxiety. Henry was particularly kind to her at this time, and praised Liv-

ingstone warmly. They attributed her distress to the absence of her lover, and she could not tell them of her secret grief; her woman's pride shrank from the confession that her charms were powerless to win or keep the devotion which she had given.

Gradually her letters to Ernest caught the tone of his. In vain she sought to break down the wall which seemed to be rearing itself between them. She yearned to tell him frankly all she suffered, but she dared not. She knew well, however, that although she could not command his feelings, and kindle that degree of love which was, perhaps, her desert, yet he would never slight or betray the affection she had given him. He would feel the deepest sympathy for her—of that she was sure; and he would understand her, too. Still, she shrank from baring her heart, even to him, for the sympathy she was sure of might shade so easily into pity, and *that* she could not—would not accept. In this conflict of feelings three weary weeks passed away.

As the time drew near for Ernest's return, Mary felt a restless misery which she could neither account for nor explain. At length, instead of her lover, came a letter saying that he should be detained a few days longer than he had expected, but offering no particular expression of regret for the delay. The note was evidently written in haste, and, as he said, under the pressure of business. The decision which Mary had long been revolving, was made that night. She would not marry Ernest Livingstone. There should be no more faltering now. She would go away and leave him forever. She must not see him again—that would be fatal to her resolution.

All that night she sat thinking—thinking. She

pondered every word that her lover had spoken, every look he had given her. When, at length, the morning light stole into her room, she went to her desk, and, unlocking it, took out his letters, kissed them again and again, and then placed them in the grate. She watched them until they were quite burned away; then, sitting down, she began to consider where she should go? "I must go somewhere, immediately!" she cried; "it would kill me to see him now—oh, I love him!" For a long time, in the confusion of her mind, no suitable place suggested itself. At last, she thought of Florence; she might go there and paint. Paint! What did she care now for art? She longed for nothing—but to die! At length she seized her pen and wrote:

"DEAREST:

"You will not judge me harshly, when you receive this letter! Oh, Ernest, I love you with all my heart and soul; but I have watched you daily, hourly, and I have felt—it does not hurt my pride to say it, for true love has no pride—that you do not love me as I love you. Dearest, do not say this is not true. I ought never to have bound my fate to yours. The only excuse I have is, that I was too exquisitely happy at the first to see anything clearly. Yes, I was selfishly happy. Here, I set you free. I am going away—to another country—where I may not see your face, nor hear your voice, any more. You have been faithful, and kind—for that I thank you. Do not grieve for me. You know I have always had faith in work as a panacea, and it shall not fail me now. One day, perhaps—when years have passed—you may own a picture painted by the famous

Mary Marlboro, and you will say: 'Once I knew her well.' Farewell—ever as ever,

“Yours,

“MARY.”

The letter lay before her, blotted with her tears. She would not send it thus; he must not see that she had wept. Wiping her eyes, she copied her letter, which this time bore no traces of the misery it had cost. She sealed it and directed it in a firm hand; then, making her toilet for breakfast, she went down stairs.

When Henry was leaving the breakfast-table she rose, and, saying, “Henry, I should like to speak with you a moment,” led the way into the drawing-room. “I am going to ask a favor of you, Henry,” she began; “I want you—to-day—to secure a passage for me in the first steamer that sails for Europe.”

“Are you crazy, Mary!” Henry exclaimed.

“No, I am not crazy. I do not wish to discuss this matter, Henry; I am of age; and by my father’s will I have a right to act as I choose. My fortune is my own, and I am free. If you please to do this for me, you will oblige me; if not, I shall do it for myself.”

“Where are you going?”

“My present intention is to go to Florence, and study painting there.”

“And Livingstone?” Henry exclaimed, involuntarily.

“Ernest will tell you, perhaps, what he means to do; I cannot answer for him.”

“Mary,” said Henry, tenderly, taking her hands in his, “do not, I entreat, do any thing rash. Our actions should be maturely considered where repentance may

prove life-long. You know that I love you as a sister. It is your duty to regard not only your own feelings, but those of a man who is bound to you by a sacred tie."

"I have reflected," she said, in a voice which, though low, was perfectly distinct. "I have already delayed too long."

"Have you spoken of this to Cecilia?"

"Not yet; I am about to do so now."

"My God, Mary! If I thought any one had made you unhappy, or done you any wrong, he should suffer for it at my hands."

"Henry, promise me," she said, laying her hand on his shoulder, "you must promise me that you will not even imagine anything of this kind. No one has made me unhappy. No one, save myself, has anything to do with my present determination. If you are thinking of Ernest, hold fast his friendship; he is worthy of your regard. I know of no better, truer man. Dear Henry, ask no questions—but trust me. I know I ask a favor, the hardest of all to grant, but I ask it of one who has ever been a good and loyal brother to me. Will you do me the service I ask?"

He hesitated a moment, and then said, "I will!"

"Thank you," said Mary, holding out her hand; "one day I shall be able to thank you yet more warmly."

But now Mary had to break this news to Cecilia, and this she dreaded most of all. The tie which united the sisters was unusually close. Orphans from early childhood, they had never been separated, and upon Cecilia's marriage Mary had taken up her abode in her sister's house. Although older only by a year, Mary had been a sort of mother to Mrs. Elliot. She had guided and

counseled her all her life, until she had come to be regarded as a superior being upon whom she might lean in all the dilemmas and sorrows of life.

When Mary had told her sister of her determination, Cecilia, for some time, utterly refused to believe her ears, but convinced at length by Mary's manner that this was indeed no jest, she wrung her hands: "What *shall* I do without you," she cried. "What shall I do without you, Mary!"

Mary pointed to the little boy who lay in his crib fast asleep. Cecilia shook her head.

"I have had you with me all my life," she said; "I can never part with you."

"But if you knew it was for my happiness, Cecilia?"

"I do not believe that it can be so! Oh Mary!—you to whom I owe everything I have—you who taught me how to win back Henry's love—and my own self-respect. Will you not open your heart to me? Can I do nothing for you in my turn?"

"The case is different," said Mary, smiling; "no one can do anything for me, except myself! If you love me, do not seek to dissuade me, dear sister. It would pain me, but could not change my purpose."

On Henry's return he handed Mary an envelope. She opened it and changed color. It contained a ticket, which secured her passage to Europe for the next Saturday—and to-day was Tuesday! She turned sick at the sight of the ticket.

"Fling it away!" said Henry, as he noticed the increasing pallor on her cheeks.

"No; I thank you for it, Henry! You were kind!"

"A sort of kindness I should not care to have called for again!" he answered.

The days which for Mary had dragged so drearily before now seemed to whirl. Cecilia and she were ever together during these last moments. It was the former who made all the preparations for the voyage, and kept up her courage to the last, lest the sight of her sorrow should contribute an additional pang.

Meanwhile letters came regularly from Mr. Livingstone, which were duly answered by Mary. Her farewell, as we know, had been written, and this was entrusted to Cecilia, who engaged that it should await her lover at his own house on his arrival from the West. Although nothing had been revealed to her in words, yet Mrs. Elliot understood much which she kept bravely to herself. She would not acknowledge even to Henry that any one who had opportunities of knowing her sister could fail to love her as she deserved.

"What shall I do, Mary," she asked, "with Mr. Livingstone's letters which may arrive after you are gone?"

"Send them with your own to my bankers!" Then she added, in a lower tone, "Those will still be mine."

Saturday came all too soon. Mary's departure had been kept a secret, and there was no one, save Henry, to witness it, for her sister would not allow Cecilia to accompany her to the ship. Mary was so overcome by her emotions when Henry kissed her and said good-by, that she could scarcely speak. At length he was obliged to tear himself away. He left her sobbing as if her heart would break. He was just in time to cross the plank. They raised it, and the vessel bore Mary away from all she loved.

CHAPTER XXI.



LET us go back to Rosa Thornton. She had received Mary's letter, which she had waited for so long as almost to have ceased to hope for it. The first glance at the postmark told her its writer's name, and with a beating heart she held it for some time before opening it. At last she broke the seal.

Her breath came quickly, for perhaps it would say something of *him*. She read it. Suddenly she flushed crimson! Engaged! But what was that to her? She should never in any case have seen him again. Was there not everything to separate them—birth, education, the ocean, and her career? What could he be to her? And yet he had been cruel to her, cruel beyond measure. She had never hurt him, and he had wantonly given her pain—pain which it seemed nothing would assuage. No, not study, nor change of scene, nor the broad future opening before her. She crushed the letter in her hand, flung it on the floor, and burst into tears. "I hate him!" she said. Suddenly she wiped her eyes: "No, I will have no traces of tears. He shall not have—even unconsciously—that triumph!"

She went to an escritoire, took from a drawer 'the roses he had given her, opened her window, and threw them out. She caught up her Shakspeare, his gift also,

and said again, "I hate him!" She carried it to the fireplace, stood still a moment, then with a convulsive effort dropped the volume into the flames. With a proud smile she watched it burn.

"At length," she said, "everything is gone. Even here," she placed her hand upon her heart, "there is no trace of him remaining! Henceforth my art shall be my only lover—the only thing I love!—save Helena!—Yes! I love her with my soul, for she, too, is divine."

The color faded from the girl's cheeks. She grew faint and weak, and sinking on her couch, she covered her face with her hands, and sobbed aloud. "It is useless!" she cried, "I cannot conquer my heart. Do what I will, the memory of other days lives within me."

On that evening, as usual, Rosa went into the Palace Garden, and for a long time sat quietly in her favorite nook, sadly listening to the laughter of the waves. She stretched forth her arms to the sea—"Cruel waves!" she whispered, "give back to me those tender messages which I entrusted to your charge. Give them back, or deep in your silent depths bury my secret."

CHAPTER XXII.



NOT many days after Mary sailed Mr. Livingstone returned to town. He had not heard from Mary during the previous week, and made anxious by this silence he had left his business at the West unfinished, to hasten home. A gloomy foreboding which he tried in vain to shake off possessed him during his journey, but the sight of his native city with its thousand bright realities, dispersed the shadows which had so persistently pursued him, and restored him to good spirits.

His first thought was to see Mary, and he was hurrying from his dressing-room, when his eye caught a letter which his servant had placed upon his table. Catching it up hastily, he ran down stairs, and springing into his carriage, bade the coachman drive to Mrs Elliot's house. Then, for the first time, he looked at the address on the envelope, and saw that it was in Mary's handwriting. From her? She was not ill, then. It was with a sensation of relief that he opened it.—But, did he read aright—what could it mean? As he read on, he could scarcely trust his eyes. Mary gone! Impossible!—Wherefore?—Whither? He was bewildered. Presently, reaching Cecilia's door, he rang the bell with violence.

“Where is Miss Marlboro?” he said, hurriedly, as the man opened the door.

"She's not here, sir!" John replied.

"Not here! Where is she?"

"Didn't you know, sir, as she was gone to Europe?"

A thousand doubts and fears swept over Livingstone's mind.

"And Mrs. Elliot?" he said.

"She's in, sir, I believe! Step in, sir, and I'll see."

Mr. Livingstone went into the drawing-room, and cast a hasty glance around. It seemed as if Mary must be there. It was not long before Cecilia appeared. She looked very grave, very sad, as she held out her hand to him.

"Where is your sister?" he said.

"On the ocean," was the answer.

"Mrs. Elliot, for God's sake, do not be so cruel to me! Tell me, why is this? What does it mean? Why has Mary gone away and left me?"

"I can tell you nothing which you do not already know. I thought there had been some misunderstanding between you. Her face grew sadder every day, until at length a feverish desire came over her of flying from the friends and places that knew her. Her aunt was intending to go abroad; and the day before the steamer sailed, Mary went to her, and begged her to accompany her. But you have received the letter which she left for you. I do not know its contents."

"What is her address?" said Livingstone. "I shall follow her immediately—in the first ship that sails."

"Are you serious?" she said, looking up at him, and meeting in his eyes an answer which she could not mistake. "You know," she added, "that I would prefer you for a brother to any one I know."

"Thank you!" Mr. Livingstone took her hand, and pressed it to his lips. "You are good to me!" He turned away.

Cecilia wrote her sister's address upon a card, and, handing it to Mr. Livingstone, "God bless you," she said. He took leave of her in silence.

No sooner was Ernest alone in his carriage than he reopened Mary's letter. He read, and re-read it, weighing every word.

"Can it be true," he said, "that the heart unwittingly reveals to others, secrets of which it is itself unconscious? How noble and unselfish she is! Can it be that I have suffered the memories of a past, long vanished, to come between us? I have, indeed, been cold and selfish, but I love her tenderly—truly! Pray God it may not be too late—that the way of atonement be still open!"

There was no hesitation in Mr. Livingstone's mind. His plans for the future were fixed, and his preparations for his voyage speedily made. A Cunard steamer was to leave for England in a few days. In this he secured his passage.

Let not the reader apprehend that this resolution involved the sacrifice of Ernest's business, and of his position at the bar. The advantages of being a young lawyer are few, and these few wholly unconnected with the emoluments of his profession. Perhaps, the chief of these advantages is the facility with which the youthful counselor may, without detriment to his clients, undertake long and arduous journeys, any one of which would ruin the business of older and more successful practitioners.

Mr. Livingstone accordingly found little difficulty in placing his legal affairs in such order as to sustain the most protracted absence without detriment. Having thus arranged his business, which consisted mainly in exchanging a certified check for a letter of credit, he had still several hours to spare. After supplying himself with one or two books with which to while away, if possible, the tedium of the voyage, he proceeded to Mr. Elliot's office to take leave of his friend.

His last evening on shore was passed by Mr. Livingstone in no very genial mood, and the next morning—being precisely a fortnight after Mary had sailed—he had left New York for Europe. The ship made a quick enough passage, although to one of the voyagers it seemed she would never reach port. On still nights, Ernest would pace the deck and picture to himself his approaching meeting with Mary. “She loves me,” he would tell himself; “her last words to me were: ‘—with all my heart and soul.’ I will do all that in me lies to make her happy.”

Arrived at Liverpool, Mr. Livingstone pursued his way with all speed to Paris. There he learned from the bankers to whom Mrs. Elliot had directed him, that Miss Marlboro had gone with her aunt, Mrs. Winthrop, to Florence. He sped on. The Alps, which had appalled Hannibal, he cleared with a bound. From train to diligence, from diligence to train again, until at length he reached Turin, just in time for the Genoa train. He hoped to reach the latter city that evening, before the boat should leave for Leghorn. He was impatient of delay; he felt as if he had committed a crime, which could only be expiated at Mary's feet.

He was not far from Genoa, when the train came to a prolonged halt. Some freight cars, it appeared, had been broken up on the track in front of them. "How long," he inquired, "would they be detained?" The conductor smiled—"It might be for a few moments—it might be for hours—Pazienza!" and, with a shrug of his shoulders, disappeared. His gayety, however, was not contagious; Mr. Livingstone, finding the delay insufferable, got out of the carriage, and paced up and down the track. It was twilight before the train got under way, but not long afterward a protracted whistle proclaimed its arrival at Genoa.

The travelers were presently assailed by numerous and vociferous porters, with "Croce di Malta!" "Hôtel Nazionale!" "Hôtel Fede!" Mr. Livingstone had stayed at the latter inn in former years, and had certain pleasant remembrances thereof, so beckoning one of the porters to take his portmanteau, and receipt for his luggage, leaped into a fiacre. It had grown quite dark before the coachman had succeeded in extracting Mr. Livingstone's trunks and strapping them behind his carriage. This operation he performed with that aggravating *dolce far niente* manner peculiar to the Italian, which, at any other time, might have amused Mr. Livingstone, but now drove him nearly wild with impatience. Then came ten minutes of jolting and rattling over cobblestone pavements. As he passed on, he caught glimpses of grand old palaces, which loomed up in glorious grandeur through the deepening twilight, until at length he was deposited at the door of the Hôtel Fede.

A servant came forward to open the carriage door—

"Am I in time for the Leghorn boat?" inquired Mr. Livingstone, anxiously.

"Non, signore! There is no boat to-night!"

"The train for Florence—when does it leave?"

"It went half an hour since, signore!"

The Fates themselves seemed to conspire against him.

"Show me to a room!" he said.

"Will the signore dine?"

"I should like first to go to my room."

The landlord smiled blandly, and pointed upward. Mr. Livingstone followed one of the waiters, and was ushered into a princely apartment. Passing to a window, he threw it open and peered out. There was nothing to see, save the Bourse, now idle and silent; and, indeed, the whole city looked desolate enough.

What in the world should he do with himself, in all the hours that must elapse before to-morrow? First of all he would dress, and order something to eat. But a dinner, however sumptuous, if solitary, is rarely provocative of keen enjoyment, or prolonged with that lingering joy which crowns a convivial meal. Our friend, therefore, rose from the table in a mood rather gloomier than that in which he had sat down. Spread open, on the *escritoire*, lay half a dozen of the miniature newspapers published in the town—what a contrast they were to the mammoth journals of his own country. He glanced listlessly over them, but their trivial local paragraphs failed to interest him; so, lighting a cigar, he strolled forth, and was soon threading the narrow streets.

The blended fragrance of Parmesan cheese and the sausage of Bologna, which pervaded the atmosphere at that hour, impelled him rapidly forward. But pre-

sently he emerged into the Piazza, where the animated concourse of pleasure seekers, beneath the soft Italian sky, dispelled his restlessness, and encouraged a cheerier mood. He soon found himself watching, with considerable amusement, the lively features and gestures of the Genoese, who brought to the most trivial discussion an intensity of feeling which the native of a northern land would have reserved for matters of vital importance.

It was in a more peaceful frame of mind than he had known for many weeks that Ernest returned to his hotel, Fatigued by his long journey, he was glad to throw himself on the curtained bed, whose luxurious appointments might have tempted a less exhausted traveler.

CHAPTER XXIII.



THE autumn had now passed away, and the hour of Rosa's *début* was near at hand. The particulars of her engagement with Salvini had been arranged, and the first night in January had been fixed as a propitious moment for her introduction to the Italian public. Rosa had now begun to rehearse daily at the theatre, and the rumor of her beauty and talents had gone abroad.

Rosa could not but be conscious of the interest she had already excited, but of late a strange apathy seemed to have stolen over her. There had been a time when she could not look forward without breathless excitement to that night which was to decide her destiny, but now the thought, even of that event, was powerless to dispel her melancholy.

Perhaps the source of her listlessness was not far to seek. Not certainly that she had consciously formed any definite hopes in regard to Mr. Livingstone, but there had always been a voice in her heart which whispered—"If you succeed, *he* will hear of it; if you become great, he will be proud of you!" That voice was silent now, and she perceived, for the first time, that it had given the key-note to her ambition. In its absence, what was left to live for? What would fame be worth without him? And the tenderness which

she had scarcely been able to conceal from him, had become, perhaps, a theme for jesting with him, and with—his wife! His wife? The words choked her!

Then the memory of Helena's great goodness to her would flow back upon her heart, and when she recalled the hopes which her friend had conceived of her success, she felt ashamed of her present weakness, and sought patiently to grow strong once more. She confessed to herself that her indifference to the career she had chosen was a wrong against her friend.

"You do not seem to feel well of late, Rosa!" Helena said to her one evening, as they were sitting together in the garden.

"I am perfectly well, dear signora," she answered.

"I fear the thought of your approaching *début* wears upon you! I do not wonder at it, but you should remember that at this very time you need all your strength, and all your beauty."

"If I am lucky enough to possess either, in the faintest degree, you may be sure," said Rosa, smiling, "that I shall try to keep it."

"Still, I cannot help feeling anxious on your account," said the countess. "Strange as it may seem, I was less excited when I was about to make my own *début*. Indeed, of late, I seem to have merged my existence completely in yours. I mean the artistic side of my nature, for, as to other things, I fancy I look on your fresh, bright life, as a poor dead body might on its disunited soul."

Rosa felt a twinge of remorse at this. What right had she to consider herself and selfishly dwell on her own troubles, when the countess had almost surrendered her own identity in her generous zeal.

"Dear friend," she said, "you are very good to me. Without you, what incentive should I have?"

"But you ought to need no spur! Your own heart should supply your stimulus. Lean on no one, Rosa! The strength of your own nature will prove the only sure support."

"We cannot walk entirely alone," said Rosa, appealingly. "We crave at least human sympathy."

"You are right—my philosophy is cold and hard. Like Medusa, it would subdue all things to a stony calm. Rosa, answer me! Suppose you were told to-night that some one loved you—loved you madly—a man of rank and wealth! Would you abandon your career and follow him?"

"I hate all men!" Rosa answered, under her breath.

A cold smile passed over Helena's face. This was indeed a child of her own training.

Rosa rose and strolled away to her favorite resort—a seat which overlooked the sea; the sea had been her friend from childhood, and knew her better than any one on earth.

It was a damp, cheerless night. Camelias were growing in the open garden: they stood erect, like cold court beauties in the moonlight, stately and proud. The marble naiads might come down from their pedestals at night, and gather them to wreath them in their hair, and thus adorned, look more beautiful.

"But," thought Rosa, "how cold and lonely they seem. The little birds do not love them, nor the butterflies, nor the bees. It is the very nature of a flower to woo the air with its sweetness, to give and to receive. How can the queen of them all be contented with so

cold a life? All cold things stand alone and aloof from the rest of the world. The countess is like one of those camelias yonder, fair and stately, but without warmth or fragrance—and she would wish me to resemble her,” she added, with a slight shudder, “and stand apart from all the world.” She plucked two of the full, white flowers and flung them into the sea. As she watched them drifting away, a deep voice at her side startled her.

“Do I find you alone?” said Count Zanini, who had approached her unobserved.

“Not at all. The Signora Contessa is here also.”

“Pardon me!” the count answered, “she found the air too cold, and has gone in. I have just spoken with her at the palace door.”

“Then I must go in likewise!”

“Will you not stay a moment to bid me welcome? Not even a hand outstretched to greet me; not one kind word, and yet it is long, very long, since I have seen you.”

“We have missed you,” said Rosa, giving him her hand. He raised it to his lips. Rosa moved forward, as if directing her steps toward the palace.

“I entreat you not to go in. I bring you the countess’s permission to stay. Tell me, what were you thinking of when I spoke to you? What were you looking at so intently?”

“I was watching two camelias that I had thrown into the waves; and I was thinking that nobody loved them, in spite of their beauty, and how sad it would be to resemble that flower, exquisite as it is. One is never long contented with what appeals to the eye only, save as it is typical of the inner life.”

"Do you think it would be sweet to be loved?"

"Indeed I do!"

"The count fixed his eyes upon her earnestly for some moments—then he said, "I see that you are soon to make your appearance before the public?"

"Next Monday night is fixed for my ordeal."

"And do you not dread it?"

"Dread a failure? Yes!"

"And not its publicity?"

"No! As I have often told you—that has no terrors for me!"

"All that you have said is remembered too well by me. It was those words which drove me from you. Do you wish them to do so again?"

"Surely I do not. Believe me, we have missed you. No one, I think, has passed our gates since you last were here."

"Do you never feel lonely?"

"Very often."

"Did you receive the message I sent you long ago?—in my last letter to the countess?"

"She gave me your letter to read."

"And did you understand it?"

"I cannot tell whether I caught its meaning," she said, coloring, "but it seemed to me a very cruel one."

"If you inflict pain on others, ought you not in justice to suffer in your turn?"

"It is certainly the retribution which follows wrongdoing of every kind. But I never gave pain intentionally."

"You have given intense pain, and without one moment's remorse," said the count, vehemently. "To look

upon you is pain—to hear your voice is pain! You know it, and glory in it.”

“That is not true. You have no right to speak thus,” she said, rising from the rustic bench where she had seated herself.

“Do not go!” cried the count, putting out his hand—“do not leave me before you have heard me! Not until I have told you how I love you. Since the night when we first met in this garden my heart has never known a moment’s peace. Ever since that hour the memory of your sweet face has haunted my memory like a beautiful, but baffling dream. I feared and fled. I went to Rome. I struggled to distract my mind, to control my heart—in vain! The future you had marked out for yourself was not one I could approve of—but it matters not! I am yours—bound hand and foot—your slave. Take me! Do with me what you will. Suffer me to follow in the dust of your triumphal chariot. I throw myself upon your mercy.”

He paused; Rosa did not speak. He went on: “I love you madly. Have pity on me! All that I have is yours. I will never presume to restrain your wishes! You shall never hear one word of reproach for your choice of a career. All that I ask is this, that before you appear upon the stage you may be forever united to me. That you will go before your audience not as the Signorina Thornton, but as my wife.” He sank at Rosa’s feet.

“Count!” she said, in a low voice, “you are very generous. I know too well the prejudices which belong to your birth and station—which you have brushed aside for me. I feel deeply the honor you have done me. But

believe me, you would never be happy. What you desire to do to-day, you would repent of hereafter. It cannot be!"

"Do not answer me so coldly!" he said. "For you I would make any sacrifice on earth. I am not a boy. I have weighed well my words. Although then as now I loved you wildly, yet when I was last here I could not have spoken to you thus. Give me some hope. Tell me if you can love me. That is all I ask."

"It is all so new to me," said Rosa, trembling, "that I cannot think. Leave me to myself for a little while!"

"And when may I learn from your lips, my fate? The suspense will be terrible. May I not come to you to-morrow evening?"

"Come when you will!" said Rosa. They walked toward the palace in silence.

"Good-night!" said the count, sadly.

"Good-night," Rosa answered, and leaving him at the porch, went on alone up the marble stairs. When she had gained her room and closed the door, so great was the tumult of her feelings that at first she could hear nothing but the beating of her own heart.

Her life indeed had been a lonely one since she had come to the countess. Confined exclusively to the society of her friend, she could not help yearning for some of that joy and blithesomeness appropriate to her youth—for some one who would laugh with her. Helena was a counselor, not a comrade, and well as Rosa loved her, the atmosphere of the house was somewhat oppressive to her.

She had missed the count with his merry laughter and lively talk, more, perhaps, than she would have cared to

own. But the memory of another had unconsciously excluded all ideas of love from her recollections of Zanini. But now that other had fallen from his pedestal; for her he existed no longer; even to think of him would soon be—perhaps already was—a crime.

At least, the count's offer had touched her. He certainly had shown himself disinterested. He had forgotten himself, and thrown everything which men—and women too—hold dear, at her feet.

She measured the extent of the sacrifice. He was young, handsome, clever, noble, rich. What had not life to offer to such as he? And then she did long for affection. Her little garden comrades—her birds and flowers—could not satisfy her. There was a void in her heart which even the countess did not fill. Nay, her art itself, in which she had striven to merge her soul, failed to meet all her yearnings.

Certainly her life was far richer in hope and joy. Yet of late it had seemed so lonely. In the count she would find a protector. No man would dare to insult her then. Had she not heard that the life of an actress was hemmed with perils—of these she would know nothing, leaning on her husband's arm.

Her husband! Did not the name bear with it a sacred obligation to love? Did she love Zanini? Love him as she might have loved another? Did her heart beat faster when she heard his step? Had she felt a joy ineffable when he told her that he loved her? Oh God, no! The mere conception of what might have been had another spoken the same words electrified her. But that other had been cruel and selfish. He certainly would not have asked her to be his

wife. The thought was ridiculous, for had he not seen her riding in the circus? It was true she had told her story to the count, but he had not seen her in those scenes. He could not realize them as the other did.

"I do not love him!" she cried out. "I cannot love him. But how can I tell him so? He meant what he said. He loves me. The tears were in his eyes. Oh, would I had never been born, than inflict on others the misery I myself have known. I know it, alas, too well. I will not see him again. I cannot bear it. I will write to him. But ah, how bitter it is to part with all those who love us. She sat for a long time in earnest meditation. Then she took her paper and wrote:

"COUNT ZANINI:

"*Dear Sir*,—I implore you to pardon me if I have caused you any pain. Believe me I suffer as deeply when I write these words. I feel so profoundly grateful to you that I cannot find adequate expression. I have thought much of what you said to me, but it is best that it should not be. As long as I live I shall not forget your generosity.

"Believe me, your sincere friend,

"ROSA THORNTON."

When she had finished writing these lines she pondered them earnestly, for she feared she had said in them either too little or too much. She sealed the letter, and threw herself on the bed. But she found no rest, and tossed sleeplessly on her pillow until the morning. Then she rose and watched from her window the rolling of the distant sea. A long time she sat thus, heedless of the pas-

sage of the hours. Suddenly she drew back and turned very pale. The count was approaching the palace door. She rang her bell quickly.

"Give this note to Count Zanini, when he calls," she said to the maid who answered her summons. Rosa listened to the girl's receding footsteps. Presently she heard the heavy door-latch raised, then the bolt withdrawn, and the door opened. Then came silence. The count had received his sentence, and with gloom in his heart had turned away from the sunlit garden.

As Rosa's day of trial approached, such a light began to gleam in the countess's eyes as her pupil had never seen there before. At times she would fasten her gaze on Rosa with an intensity of meaning from which the young girl shrank half dismayed. She feared that Helena required of her more than she could give, and that if her *début* should prove a failure, her bitterest pang would spring from her friend's disappointment.

"I know it all!" said the countess one morning, giving her *protégée* one of her piercing looks. "I know it all. You have refused what would have most tempted any other woman. And this for your art's sake! Believe me, I honor you for it!"

Rosa turned away her head, and there was a heavy feeling at her heart, for she knew she did not deserve this praise. Had not what the countess spoke of as temptation proved tempting to her also. And even since, and recently, had there not been moments when she fancied that her decision might have been mistaken?

"Come into my room," said Helena, from whose searching glance no expression of Rosa's features, how-

ever fugitive, escaped. She sought to give a new direction to thoughts which were evidently preoccupied, and proceeded to show her pupil the dress which she meant her to wear at the theatre. "It had just been made up for me," she told her, "when I left the stage."

Rosa could not restrain an exclamation of surprise and pleasure when her eyes fell on the beautiful costume. The stuff was a white satin, cut square in the neck, with flowing sleeves and a long train. The hem of the gown, as well as the sleeves and waist, were heavily embroidered with gold. A transparent veil of gold thread, which was to be fastened to the hair by a coronet of diamonds, shrouded the shoulders, and fell to the edge of the train.

"Try it on!" said Helena, pleased with the gleams of childlike joy in Rosa's face. And she assisted her to adjust the veil; then, standing a little distance, surveyed her with genuine admiration.

"You are indeed beautiful!" she said.

"Do you know," said Rosa, "in this gown I have a feeling almost of disloyalty, as if I were usurping your prerogative."

"You need not," Helena answered quickly; "it suits you well! Francesca does not change her dress during the piece, but in the last act she throws aside the crown and veil, for they are insignia of the house of Rimini. For my sake you must promise to wear this dress. Ah, I little thought when I laid it away that it would ever be worn by any one! I have many other costumes adapted to my favorite rôles, all of which I hope you will one day assume. The others, however, have been worn by me.

"The only regret I have," said Rosa, "in accepting

this, is that you have never worn it. Had you done so, it might have lent me inspiration."

"Inspiration, my child, springs from no outward source. Its fount is in yourself—here, beneath these crowned locks," said Helena, touching the coronet on Rosa's brow.

"Would it not be dreadful," exclaimed Rosa, laughing, "if at the close of my first evening I should be compelled to abandon the stage, crying with *Pia dei Ptolemai*—Helena made me, I was unmade by myself."

"That must not—shall not be!" said the countess quickly. "You will—you shall succeed! Tell me, do you think Zanini will be there? I should like him to behold with his own eyes all that he has lost."


"I do not know," Rosa said, impatiently. It was the first time that the countess had heard an accent of petulance in her voice.

"You think me cruel. I am so. I cannot but feel a momentary pleasure when a man suffers pain. My own heart is a scarred thing, and yet, I think," she added, "that I would go through fire and water to save a pang to any human being. There is something like a dualism in my nature which I cannot comprehend. There are times when I detest those whom I truly love. But never you, Rosa. You are the one being on earth who is always dear to me. And yet the knowledge that it is so often fills me with a wild regret."

"You would never say that, signora, if you could appreciate all that you have done for me—if you would measure the depth of my loving gratitude."

For a moment Helena's face softened, and she drew Rosa to her heart.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IVINGSTONE awoke the morning after his arrival in Genoa from slumbers perhaps heavier than a lover in pursuit of his mistress ought in strict propriety to enjoy, but his long and tiresome journey must be his apology to the exigent reader. No sooner was he thoroughly aroused than he glanced around him to find the sunlight pouring through his windows. Drawing his watch from beneath his pillow, he perceived the time to be nine o'clock. He rang the bell violently.

"How does it happen," he demanded of the servant, "that no attention is paid in this house to one's orders? Why was I not awakened?"

"I knocked a long time at the signore's door, but the signore not answering, I concluded that he did not wish to be disturbed."

"Blockhead!" returned Livingstone, "you must have knocked with a feather. I have lost the train!"

"Will the signore take a cup of coffee before rising?" inquired the man, with a grin, the prospect of Mr. Livingstone's detention apparently causing him great satisfaction.

"At what hour does the next train leave for Florence?"

"I could not inform the signore, without making some inquiry."

"Inquire at once, then, and bring me word," cried Livingstone, to whose impatient spirit the cheerful visage of the servant was at that moment peculiarly aggravating.

The waiter speedily returned with a newspaper, which, he said, would give the signor the hours of departure, and bore likewise a message from the padrone, whereof he delivered himself with his previous hilarity, to the effect that the signor need not hurry, as breakfast could be prepared at all hours—would the signor partake of that meal in his own apartment, or in the coffee-room?

"When I desire it I will ring, and give my orders."

The man bowed and disappeared. Livingstone turned over the journal, and discovered by the schedule of trains that none would leave Genoa for Florence until six o'clock that evening.

"Not hurry!" he exclaimed. "Confound the fellow's impudence! Another long day before me, and not even the stimulus of movement to break its monotony. He arose, and amid reflections upon the tendency of solitude to produce a general crabbedness and misanthropical state of the feelings, he completed his toilette. Scarcely was he dressed when he heard a shuffling in the hall, followed by a sharp rap at his door.

"Come in!" he called out, glad of any distraction. At once the door opened, and a brisk little man, in a faded velveteen coat, with a Garibaldi hat in his hand, entered the room, and turning to a second gentleman, who seemed a sort of shadow of himself, motioned him mysteriously to follow. The poor shade, who seemed to be in low spirits, entered, and, at a sign from his superior, removed a strip of green baize from a picture

which he carried under his arm, and placed against the wall.

"There!—Place it nearer to the window! A little back. Now slightly to the left—there, we have a perfect light!"

These injunctions were issued by the brisk maestro to his shade, who, in silence and increasing depression of spirits, shifted the picture from side to side. Mr. Livingstone, meanwhile, surveyed their proceedings with much amusement.

"Milord!" began the newcomer.

"I am not a lord," answered Livingstone, "what do you want?"

"Pardon me, milord, I will respect your disguise. It has been my good fortune, through your landlord, to penetrate it. So highly has Signor Bettini extolled your taste, that I have ventured to submit to your inspection a very great marvel—an original!" His face beamed with enthusiasm. "An original masterpiece of the divine Correggio! It was purchased," he continued, dropping his voice to a stage-whisper, "it was purchased by me from Prince Doria himself—you know the prince, he is in straitened circumstances—"

Livingstone felt almost grateful to the man for whiling away a portion of his morning, and listened with a semblance of sympathetic interest, which encouraged the dealer to proceed with growing earnestness.

"The theme of this immortal work is not unworthy of the master's genius. You perceive that the picture represents a martyr to the Christian faith—dying at the stake!"

Livingstone examined the canvas curiously. Beneath

alternate layers of varnish and dust he could descry nothing but two cherubs, smiling inanely at one another, and holding between them a garland of roses.

"Where," he asked, with considerable surprise, "is the martyr, and where the stake?"

The dealer shook his head, and smiled deprecatingly, as if he masked a well-bred pity for his ignorance.

"Milord jests," he said, "Correggio, as milord well knows, loved to look on the bright side of existence, and his exquisite sensibility shrank from the gross portrayal of physical suffering. Even in depicting pain, he loves to hint at it through some cheerful collateral circumstance, rather than obtrude it on the eye. Thus, here—the agony of the martyr—nay, the martyr himself—and the hideous stake—are all sedulously concealed. You are left to guess them by the light thrown by the flames on yon cherubic forms." And the man pointed to what Livingstone had taken for the mild radiance of the morning, in whose gleams the cherubs seemed to play.

"Observe," the man continued, unmoved by the bewildered look upon his listener's face, "observe the crown of roses which those cherubs hold, in readiness to crown the saint the moment his agony is over. What marvelous invention! With what striking force, yet with what matchless delicacy, has the master's hand wrought out his sublime conception—and this, all this—you can obtain for a wretched pittance—for ten thousand francs. At auction, it would fetch, as I told the prince, ten times that sum! But noblesse will have its prejudices! I have just brought it from the Doria Palace—from the very apartment where the Signorina Rosa lives."

"Who is this Signorina Rosa?" exclaimed Livingstone, his interest suddenly awakened.

"Is it possible you have not heard of the Signorina Rosa—she who is to make her *début* this evening?"

"Her *début*? Where?—as what?"

"On the stage—as an actress! The whole city is in a whirl of expectation! Surely you will not fail to see her!"

The Correggio, the little vender, and his shadow had vanished, as if by magic, from Livingstone's vision. He stood silent, wrapped in his own thoughts. His visitor drew back, willing to allow the stranger time and liberty to consider his precious treasure and its price. But his patience had limits, and finding the foreign gentleman arrived at no decision, he thought fit to remind him of the passage of time.

"If milord would but consider how trifling is the sum I ask!"

Mr. Livingstone was recalled from dream-land.

"I will think of it," he said, "you may call to-morrow for an answer."

The man's face fell. "Yes, milord, but suppose—"

"I will give you a definite answer to-morrow! I have business this morning." He took out his watch, and glanced impatiently toward the door.

The feelings of the dealer were wounded in their most sensitive point. It was plain that he held himself insulted in the artistic side of his nature. He signed to the shadow to take up the painting, and with his own hands helped to fold it in its green covering. Never before had the poor shadow found him so affable. With a glance of scorn toward the spot where Livingstone

stood abstracted and quite unconscious of the wrath he had kindled in the Italian's breast, the baffled vender of false originals departed.

Mr. Livingstone looked about him. He was alone. Man and picture had vanished. He went to the table, and catching up the paper, eagerly scanned its columns. Suddenly his eye was arrested, and it was with a throbbing heart that he read the following paragraph :

"We are happy to announce the *début* of the Signorina Rosa Thornton, which will take place this evening, at the Teatro Paganini. The signorina is a pupil of the celebrated Helena Ortelli, and the *rôle*, well adapted to a young *débutante*, is Francesca di Rimini."

In that instant, many conflicting emotions were awakened in Livingstone's heart. But now his sole anxiety had been the question how he might earliest leave Genoa, yet here were a score of excellent reasons suddenly suggested to his mind why he should remain. Mary was not awaiting him, he told himself; she did not know he was coming. How could the delay of a few hours affect her, then? Here was Rosa to make her *début* this very evening. He must see her! He pondered long over the difficulties of his position. In vain, however, did his conscience summon him to go. He had hit on a compromise with which he bade it be satisfied. He would remain and see Rosa—but at a distance only—amid a crowd of strangers. He would not speak to her, and would leave the city without her knowledge. The visit of the picture dealer had occupied but an hour. It was still early.

Going down to the coffee-room, he breakfasted, and

then strolled forth. It was one of those balmy days which Italy knows even in January, and makes it in midwinter to bloom like spring. Abstracted as he was, Mr. Livingstone could not remain wholly insensible to such subtle sweetness, but his mind was ill at ease, and the novel and varied scene in which he moved had lost much of its power over his spirit. He seemed to himself like a man adrift, and certainly it was a strange combination of circumstances by which he had been diverted from the bourne toward which reason and duty had directed him. Instinctively, as he went on, his pace quickened in the effort to escape the memories and fancies which beset him. Before he was aware, he had left behind the populous quarter of the town, and was close on the high road to Sestia, which winds along in faithful companionship with the Mediterranean, until it reaches Nice. He halted and looked around him. Just opposite the point where he stood rose the great palace of the Dorias. At any other moment Livingstone would have gazed with interest on its sumptuous pile, but to his present mood the associations disclosed by the conversation of the morning quite obscured its history.

As he gazed at the building, the remembrance of Rosa's letter to Mary suddenly occurred to his mind, and confirmed what the picture dealer had told him. And this, then, was her home. A few feet only separated him from her! He needed but to cross the street, push open yon iron gratings, and he would stand within the very grounds which she trod daily—nay, he might meet her face to face. The temptation was great. But he remembered that he was bound in honor to another, and, turning resolutely away, he retraced his steps.

What should he do? Where should he go? The mood of the solitary traveler is often a lonesome one, but in Livingstone's present circumstances he felt a special sense of desolation. He returned to his hotel in a very gloomy frame, and passed the remainder of the day in his chamber. He emerged, however, at the sound of the *table d'hôte* bell, not liking the idea of a solitary meal, and made his way to the dining-room. The numerous courses of an Italian dinner, which, at another time, might have exhausted his patience, had at least the merit of bridging over the time which intervened before the opening of the theatre.

CHAPTER XXV.



AT eight o'clock the play was to begin, and long before that hour Mr. Livingstone, in company with what seemed to him to be no small part of the population of Genoa, had bent his steps toward the Teatro Paganini. He had passed the day in such agitation of mind that it had not occurred to him to secure a ticket. What if, after all, he should fail to find admittance? He pressed eagerly through the crowd only to learn that all the boxes and parquet seats were already taken. There was no help for it. With many others he must stand.

As group after group passed Livingstone, he caught fragments of their conversation. Everybody seemed to be talking of the new actress. Most prophesied a failure. Here and there one hoped for a success. One man had seen her in the street, and pronounced her unquestionably a beauty. Another whispered something about a Roman count, who, he declared, actually wanted to marry her.

Mr. Livingstone had heard more than he cared for, and hurried on, not unmarked by some of his neighbors, who had noticed his excitement. At length he succeeded in pushing his way to the orchestra, but fearing lest Rosa might see and recognize him, he took a station just in the rear of the proscenium, and fastened his eyes absently on the curtain.

Preoccupied as he then was, he was not aware that every detail of the scene around him was indelibly impressing his memory, but so it was, and long afterward every incident of that evening rose vividly before him. Then looking back, he could recall even the scene portrayed upon the drop curtain, in the distance the Duke of Ferrara's palace, in the foreground a little lake, not far off Leonora d'Este listening to the "*Jerusalem Liberata*" as recited by her unhappy lover, Tasso. Then, too, he heard once more the scraping of the orchestra violins, and the familiar air from "*Il Ballo*," which, at the time, he had not recognized.

Meanwhile, the curtain swayed to and fro. And now exclamations of impatience began to be heard from the audience—the overture had been once played, and the orchestra were proceeding to repeat it, when suddenly a bell tinkled, and the curtain rolled slowly up. For some moments our hero did not trust himself to raise his eyes. When, at length, he did so, he beheld two persons on the stage. One is Salvini, who plays Lanciotto, the husband of Francesca. The other is Guido, Francesca's father.

Salvini is warmly greeted by the public, and Livingstone hears some one near him say that the great actor is doing his best to-night, but in vain our friend struggles to follow the dialogue, all he catches is Lanciotto's cry—"Eccola! Behold her!" at which all eyes were turned to the side scenes. There was a moment's pause, a faint rustle of garments, and Francesca stood before the audience. "Beautiful!" was the irrepressible exclamation which rose to the lips of the young men who were clustered about Mr. Livingstone.

Rosa was exceedingly pale. She trembled, but stood

erect, and with a gentle dignity faced the arbiters who were to crown or crush her hopes. Her white satin dress fell in ample folds around her, and set off the natural grace of her form. When the unpremeditated applause which had greeted her entrance ceased, she bent her head in graceful recognition, and turned toward Guido, who addressed her thus:

“My daughter, embrace me!”

It was her turn to speak. There was perfect silence throughout the house. Rosa trembled, hesitated—then said in a voice which shook perceptibly:

“Father, give to me thy right hand, that I may cover it with kisses!”

“Bene!—Benissimo!” is heard from some one in the crowd. And now Guido folds his daughter in his arms; she gains courage, her voice, as she goes on, grows stronger and clearer, the audience listens with increasing interest, and a storm of applause followed the termination of the act. Rosa was called forth repeatedly, and bouquets rained upon the stage. At one moment she glances upward to a stage-box at her left hand. Livingstone’s eye followed hers, and rested on a beautiful woman who was leaning forward, apparently unconscious of everything but the young *débutante* before her. She stretched forth her arms toward Rosa, then sank back, and closed her eyes.

“That is the distinguished Helena Ortelli,” said a communicative youth, addressing Livingstone. “It was she who taught the signorina. Her pupil does her credit.”

Livingstone did not answer. He would have found it impossible to talk with strangers of Rosa.

The second act opens with a scene between Francesca and Guido. She reproaches her father bitterly for her marriage to Lanciotto, and would fain have revealed to him her early attachment to Paolo, but she cannot frame the words. Every moment as the play progressed Rosa's acting gained fervor and brilliancy. But she was especially effective in the scenes where she and Paolo are alone upon the stage, when unwittingly her heart betrays its secret. At such times poor Ernest could not repress a pang of jealousy, and found a sort of consolation in the thought that Paolo must lose her at the last.

It was the last act, however, which carried away the audience. The Lord of Rimini has discovered his brother's guilty passion for Francesca, and has caused his arrest. But Paolo has broken from his guards, and rushed into his beloved's presence that he may see her at least once more. At the same moment, Lanciotto, believing his wife's repentance to be genuine, is approaching to bid her farewell, and give her, before she returns to her father's protection, his forgiveness. He surprises her with his brother, and now persuaded of their incorrigible guilt, strikes savagely at Paolo, but Francesca throws herself between them and receives the blow. Maddened by the deed, Lanciotto thrusts his sword through Paolo, who also falls. Francesca in her death agony lifts her head toward her lover and whispers—"Eternal will be our punishment." But his dying lips return—"Eternal will be our love!"


So intense had been the interest awakened by this scene that for some moments after the curtain fell not a sound broke the silence of the audience. Then suddenly pealed forth a simultaneous shout of "Bis!—Bis!"—

the familiar ejaculations by which Italians demand the repetition of a play. Many times Salvini led Rosa before the curtain, but at last the lights were lowered, and the people began to throng toward the door.

Waiting until the crowd had dispersed, Mr. Livingstone passed into the street, where he lingered, hoping for one more glimpse of Rosa. All were gone except a few young men who were loitering around the theatre for the same purpose as Livingstone. "She must have gone out by the back entrance," said one, "she has given us the slip. There's no use waiting." His companions seemed to agree with him, and accordingly strolled away.

The streets were growing rapidly silent, as carriage after carriage rolled away. One coach, however, was still standing near the theatre, and late as it was, Livingstone fancied he might yet see Rosa. Suddenly a door opened to let out a gentleman and two ladies. Mr. Livingstone stepped a little aside, then turning, he was able to see Rosa distinctly. She was with Salvini, and the lady whom he had remarked in the stage-box. He saw the actor help the ladies into their carriage, and heard him say, as he took Rosa's hand in both of his, "A thousand thanks! It has been a grand success!" Then, touching his hat, he left them, while Livingstone followed, with his eyes, the carriage which bore Rosa rapidly away.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HE next morning, at an early hour, Mr. Livingstone left Genoa for Florence. He reached the latter city at nightfall, and driving at once to an hotel, made a hasty toilet, and sallied forth in quest of Mary. Florence is by no means a great capital, and it was not many minutes before he found the place to which he had been directed by Miss Marlboro's banker. Learning, upon inquiry, that Miss Marlboro was at home, he sent up word that a gentleman waited below, who desired to see her on business. Miss Marlboro bade the servant say that she would be obliged if the gentleman would step up to her *salon*. Ernest followed the servant immediately. The door of Miss Marlboro's room had been left ajar, and before entering, Livingstone caught a brief glimpse of the apartment. Mary was seated in an ample easy chair, which had been rolled into a bay window. Her face was slightly averted, her head thrown back, listlessly, and her whole air was expressive of languor. At the approach of steps, she turned, saw Ernest, and uttering a cry, sank back in her chair.

"Mary!" he said, entering quickly and kneeling by her side, "I am here; speak to me, dearest!"

She could not answer. She placed her hand on his head. He waited for her to speak.

"Ernest, it was kind of you to come!" at length she whispered.

Ernest drew her gently to him.

"What a runaway you are!" he said, speaking half mirthfully, that she might have time to recover her composure. "Was it to make a knight-errant of me in earnest, or did you, woman-like, think yourself free to fling a man aside when once you had tired of him? Where was your conscience, I wonder, meanwhile? Do not weep so, dearest! It wrings my heart!"

"You got my last letter?" she asked.

"The letter entrusted to your sister?—Yes!—But you must confess that there was little consolation to be found in it. It told me only that you had gone—fled—I knew not whither, cruel one!"

"I did it for the best, Ernest," she answered, with the truthful, fearless look he knew so well. "But tell me now, how you traced my hiding-place?"

"That is my secret! All I will reveal is this, that since I found a clew, I have traveled day and night. And do you know, that you have not yet given me a welcome. Not a word has fallen from your lips, to tell me even that you do not regret my coming."

"You know too well that you need no words," she said, smiling through her tears. Then, giving way to her feelings, she added, "Oh, Ernest, how blest I am—blest, beyond the power of words. I have suffered so much—so much! I think my courage would have failed me could I have foreseen the misery my resolution would cost me. I thought I was never to see you again—that I had lost you forever."

"You cannot have thought so," he answered. "You

were testing your own heart in the crucible of absence—not mine!”

“Ah, Ernest! How good of you to come! There is no night, they say, so dark but it has its dawn. I little dreamed when I looked out of my window this morning that my dawn would come so soon. Yet it seems that all the gloom was in my own eyes.”

“You fancied your indolent Ernest incapable of so much effort—was that it, dearest? You may as well confess your conviction of my unworthiness.”

Mary laughed.

“How pleasant it is to hear you laugh! After all, a woman is never so beautiful as when she is happy!”

“Poets, however,” she answered, archly, “proclaim tears mightier than smiles!”

“Not Byron, certainly! He says it is animation that makes you queens of the heart! But poets are erratic creatures, and never know exactly what they want. They live in dreams!”

“Dreams are often sweet, Ernest! I am dreaming now!”

“Of what, Mary?”

“That you are beside me! Will you not vanish when I wake?”

“It is because I do not mean to vanish, that I am here—here to entreat the fulfillment of your promise made so long ago.”

“What promise?” she said, trembling in spite of herself.

“Did you not promise to be my wife?”

For some moments Mary did not answer. At length,

she said, while the color mantled her face—"Ah, let me dream a little longer, Ernest!"

He took her hand kindly in his own. "You are far away from your home," he said, "in a foreign land—where you may be exposed to careless words. People are ever prone to be censorious!"

"Do you mean because I left home so unexpectedly? But no one ever spoke ill of me in my life. Let us wait a little!" she said, pleadingly. "It is true that my aunt is not here now, but she has placed me under the care of the American Consul's wife, and she has been very kind to me."

"It is for you to name the day, dearest!" he answered, "but let it be an early one!"

CHAPTER XXVII.



AND now, for Mary, the days flew by on wings. The greater portion of her time was passed in wandering over Florence with Ernest. Sometimes they would sit for hours, talking of the future, and the past—on the stone bench where Dante had so often communed with Giotto, gazing with the immortal architect on the beautiful dome of his creation. They studied long at the gates baptized those of Paradise, and Mary felt that they now lay open to her. Together, Miss Marlboro and her lover stood enraptured before the noble figure of the Perseus, but the Gorgon's head in the young hero's grasp could not freeze her heart. They lingered by Titian's Venus, while Mary half confessed the goddess not unworthy of her worship, and that, at her altar, she would gladly kindle a perpetual flame. They walked together amid the cool shadows of the Boboli gardens. They drove in the soft twilight on the Cascini.

Never had Ernest been so devoted to Mary, for he felt the keenest remorse for the sorrow he had caused her. He had found her sadly changed, and since his arrival had watched with pleasure the glow of health steal back into her cheek. He had sworn to himself on that first evening when he met her that he would do his duty, and although his heart had never been heavier, he had

well nigh crushed down the pain and achieved the conquest of himself.

One day, while they were walking together, Mary said—"Do you know, Ernest, that you were in Genoa on the very night when Rosa Thornton made her *début* on the stage. Was it not a curious coincidence? Yes, reckoning the days of your journey, I found that you must have arrived there the previous evening. Only think, if you had known it, you might have seen her."

"I did see her."

"You saw her—where?"

"I was at her *début*."

"Ernest!—And you never spoke of it! Nothing would have interested me half so much. It must be that you were cruelly disappointed in her—and yet, the accounts of her appearance were so brilliant. Did you not like her? She must be lovely."

"I thought her perfect! I never have seen anything so beautiful on the stage before! She left nothing to be desired!"

"I am so glad!" said Mary, clasping her hands; then she added, quickly, "but why did you never speak of it before?"

"We had so much to talk about."

"But," persisted Mary, "you related so many incidents of your stay in Genoa. I remember your account of the Correggio, of your walk, of the *table d'hôte*—it is strange you should have forgotten Rosa."

They walked on in silence for some time, then Mary said, "If you had but mentioned it, Ernest!"

"Undoubtedly I should have done so had any partic-

ular incident recalled the circumstance to my mind ! But look dearest, what a lovely evening ! ”

“ Yes,” she answered, with a sigh, “ it is lovely ! ”

They did not speak again, and instinctively their steps turned homeward. When they parted they knew that a shadow had fallen across their path.

A few days passed—days which, although Mary could not have explained precisely why, were not so bright as their predecessors—there was something intangible she could not explain to herself—yet she felt that there was a sad reality in it. She was seated in her apartment musing pensively, and awaiting Ernest, when she was aroused by a gentle knock at the door.

“ Come in ! ” she called out, gayly, divining who it was. The door opened, but instead of Ernest a young girl entered. It was with difficulty that Mary suppressed an exclamation of disappointment. She hesitated a moment, uncertain who it was, then sprang forward and threw her arms about Rosa Thornton’s neck.

“ Is it indeed you ? How glad I am to see you ! I have longed so eagerly to see you ! How did you know that I was here ? ”

“ You knew of my appearance on the stage ? ” asked Rosa.

“ Of course I did. I have read of all your triumphs ! ”

“ Salvini was engaged only for a month in Genoa. That finished, we started for Florence.”

“ Where you are playing ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ But you have not told me how you knew that I was here.”

“ We arrived last evening at our hotel, and this morn-

ing the travelers' list was sent up that we might add our names. I had the curiosity to glance at the foreign visitors, and the very first name I lighted on was yours. So, as soon as I was free after rehearsal, I took a coach and drove here. Still, I had some misgivings when I knocked at your door, and was so overcome with delight at finding it was really you, that for a moment I could not speak."

"Is your carriage waiting for you?"

"Yes, it is at the door!"

"Let me dismiss it, for as long as it waits I shall be in dread of losing you every moment."

"Thank you—nothing would give me greater pleasure than to remain. But let me come and sit down beside you. I want to look into your face."

"And I in yours," said Mary. "You are very much changed, and yet, when I look at you closely, I find the expression I remember so well."

"You, at any rate, have remained the same," said Rosa.

"Have I?"

Another knock. Mr. Livingstone entered, and recognizing Rosa, changed color. Mary noticed this, and it made her heart beat fast. Rosa had flushed also, but Miss Marlboro did not look at her, having eyes only for Ernest. There was a mixture of cordiality and hauteur in the manner in which Rosa put out her hand.

"It is long since I have seen you," she said. How familiar her voice sounded to his ear! He smiled as he answered:

"I cannot say that! I have seen you recently—at a moment when you little dreamed of it."

Rosa looked perplexed.

"It ought not to be a mystery!" he continued, "since you are destined, in the career you have chosen, to be often seen by those you do not see!"

Her face lighted—then grew mystified again as she answered—"But Miss Marlboro told me she had not seen me on the stage."

"I spoke only of myself!"

"Pray then, where did you see me?"

"At Genoa, on the night of your *début*!"

"Did you indeed?" said Rosa, her face radiant.

"Were you not very much frightened?" said Mary.

"What an ordeal it must have been!"

"I could not tell you what my sensations were precisely, but when I first came forward on the stage, and, hearing the clapping of hands, courtesied in return, I feared that I might not be able to regain my feet, I felt so weak! At first, too, when I began to recite, I could not hear my own voice—and that frightened me. I looked around and saw nothing but a sea of upturned faces which made me think of that description in the '*Inferno*,' where the people are as thick as leaves. I wondered if on the last day they would look like that, and if, in the crowd we should recognize our friends; all this time I was acting, saying, I know not what."

"How strange!" said Mary.

"Oh, no! I had learned my part so thoroughly, that the words uttered themselves, otherwise I must have failed!"

"But as it was," said Mary, "you had a brilliant success!"

"Oh!" she answered, coloring, and casting down her

eyes—how well Ernest remembered those long lashes sweeping her cheeks—“all that I owe to my dear teacher.”

“Is she with you now?” asked Ernest.

“Yes; I could not travel without her protection. I hope you will both of you make her acquaintance. She lives wholly secluded from the world, and sees no one, but she would gladly, I am sure, make an exception for friends who have been so kind to me!”

“I should be delighted to meet her,” said Mary. “I have heard so much of the Countess Malaspina, she must be a rarely attractive person.”

“She is”—said Rosa, enthusiastically—“like a noble figure in *alta rilievo* against the dull background of ordinary people. She is beautiful, and instinct with genius. But some great sorrow has swept over her life, and left it cold and colorless as marble.”

“I have seen her!” said Ernest.

“Where, pray?”

“At the theatre the same night I saw you. I remember her perfectly. Indeed, she is too striking a person, once seen, to be forgotten! She was in a proscenium box, unconscious, evidently, of any presence save yours! Once she leaned forward and gazed at you so intently that I thought she meant to speak.”

“Yes, that was my dear countess! I am glad you saw and admired her.” Then, after a pause, Rosa said, “Mr. Livingstone, tell me something of George! I am ashamed to have seemed forgetful of him so long.”

“Poor fellow!” said Mr. Livingstone, with a sigh.

“Why do you speak so sadly? Has anything happened to him?”

"Nothing more can befall him!"

"Then he is dead!" she said, with quivering lips.

"Yes, George is dead!"

"And his poor mother? What has become of her?"

"He died from exposure during his mother's last illness."

"Both dead! Oh, that I might have seen him—to say one friendly word!"

"His last thought was for you. Just before he died he sent for me. He seemed so uneasy that I asked him if there was anything I could do for him. His face lighted, and putting his poor wasted hand beneath the pillow, he drew out a parcel which he handed me, saying, 'You'll give it to Miss Rosa. It's my cap and bells! You'll see she gets it some day; it don't much matter when, but some day! I know she'll not despise them, for you'll tell her they were all I had; and you'll tell her that I would have got her a little present, but I drew out all my savings when my mother died.' When I promised to carry out his wishes, he put his hand in mine and said, 'Thank you, sir—a great weight is off my mind.'"

"Have you kept them for me?" said Rosa, in a faltering voice.

"I have treasured them with religious care, but I have left them in New York. I hardly expected to see you so soon."

They were all silent for some moments. Mr. Livingstone was thinking of George's last words—words which he had not told Rosa. The poor fellow's last wish had been that they might be united.

Rosa looked at her watch. She rose.

"I fear," she said, "that the countess will be anxious. Might I trouble you," she turned to Mary, "to ring and order me a carriage?"

"Oh, do not leave me so soon!" said Mary.

"Indeed, I wish I might remain; but I think I ought to go. It is growing dark."

"Will you not accept Mr. Livingstone's escort?" said Mary.

"Thank you," Rosa answered, with some embarrassment. "I would not willingly trouble Mr. Livingstone."

"But," persisted Mary, "I could not permit you to go alone, even if you drive home. Ernest, will you not offer your services to Miss Thornton?"

"It will certainly give me much pleasure if Miss Thornton will avail herself of them."

Rosa bent her head in assent. "Good-by, then," she said, "and do not fail to come and see me!"

"I will surely call on you," Mary answered. "Good-by!" She followed them to the stairs, gave one hasty look at Ernest, bade her visitor again good-night, then listening to their retreating steps until they could be heard no longer, turned back into her parlor, and throwing herself upon a sofa, burst into tears.

When Livingstone and Rosa reached the street the former offered his arm. She took it, and for a few minutes they walked on in silence. Both were preoccupied—he recalling the last occasion when her arm had rested on his own—that sunny morning on the steamer—Rosa thinking of George, and the poor clown's fate, with which a score of memories linked themselves. It was she who first broke the silence.

"And Bruno?" she said. "But I am almost afraid to ask for him. He, too, may be dead."

"I saw Bruno just before leaving New York. He is the same noble animal you knew!"

"Do you think I could buy him back? Not a day has passed since we parted—Bruno and I—that I have not remembered him most fondly."

"I believe," he answered, "it would be the easiest thing in the world to regain Bruno. He shall be at your disposal, if you wish, within three months at the latest. I will write and have him shipped immediately."

"You, Mr. Livingstone?"

"Yes; Bruno belongs to me—he is a grand animal—and I love him almost as well as his mistress does!"

"It is to you, then, that I owe a second debt of gratitude!"

"You owe me nothing. It would wound Bruno's pride to imagine that he had placed you under obligation to any one."

"Dear Bruno! No, Mr. Livingstone, keep him! He could not well have a kinder master. How strange it seems. First I owe to my horse all I now am. Bruno, you and the countess made me an artist—what an odd triumvirate!"

She looked up at Mr. Livingstone. He caught her glance—her eyes fell.

"I am glad you saw me in Francesca di Rimini," she said, hurriedly. "Did you like the piece?"

"You were perfect in it!" he answered, quietly.

"Why did you not make yourself known to me? It was not a very friendly act to pass through Genoa like a stranger, wrapped in your incognito."

"I fancied that amid the excitement of a *début*, a friend would have no claim upon you!"

"You imagined, I fear, that an Italian is incapable of an American's loyalty. But it was just as well, perhaps, that you avoided me at that time," said Rosa, a faint shadow of resentment flitting over her face.

"When do you appear on the stage in Florence?"

"To-morrow evening."

"In what *rôle*?"

"Virginia! I do not much like the part, but I am obliged to play what Salvini chooses."

Mr. Livingstone looked grave. "Yes," he said, "I suppose that is inevitable—but if he should request you to take a part repugnant to your feelings?"

"I should refuse!" she answered quickly. "I am free to break my contract with him if I please!"

"Are you acquainted with the actresses and actors who take part in the same plays?"

"Very slightly! If there are any whose appearance I like, I can, of course, form their acquaintance, but as a rule those assigned to subordinate parts are not artists. They act for their livelihood, not from any love of the vocation, and unless acting is conscientiously studied, it is one of the least laborious of professions; these people are almost certain of not rising, for their talent is easily measured. Salvini holds the strings, and they move as he tells them, like so many puppets."

"And do you like your profession? I mean, knowing what you now do, would you choose it?"

"Yes; I love my profession. It has been my friend when I was alone and unbefriended—it gave me hope when I was hopeless! Would you not love anything

that had freed you from the worst of enemies—self-contempt? Would it not have even a personal dearness for you?”

“It might,” he replied, moodily.

“How lovely the Arno looks!” she said, stopping a moment to lean over the bridge they were crossing, “like a silver thread run through the stars—see them shimmering on its surface. Life, to the eye of youth, is but a chord that binds together days of glory.”

“Aye, but no sooner does truth dawn, than she puts out these bright eyes of hope and faith.”

“I would not readily believe that it is always so!” she answered. “I grant that one is often defeated, yet it is something to have fought in a good cause. It is well, at least, to die in armor.”

“That is true,” he said; “that is indeed true.”

“I never pass this bridge at night,” said Rosa, “but there arises before me the figure of Buondelmonte. I see him as if he were really there, mounted on a grand horse, just parted from his fond betrothed, when the fatal charms of the beautiful daughter of the Donati lure him from his honor; his hasty secret marriage with her—and then, as he repasses this place, bearing proudly his new conquest in his heart, the brothers of his betrayed love, who spring upon him and leave him weltering in his blood; the body that beat so full of life a moment before, borne back dead to his young wife; it is one of the most picturesque scenes of the middle ages.”

Livingstone looked at his companion, and remembering one who was waiting at home for him, Rosa seemed to him the fatal charmer who was to lure away his soul. Never. It should not be!

"Every stone," he said, "of Florence might rise up and tell a history. But my favorite haunt is San Miniato, where the great spirit of Michael Angelo defended liberty in her last stronghold! There is a simplicity and an air of repose about that little chapel, as if the calm soul of the great master yet brooded over it. It is the only Catholic church where I have felt a genuine religious awe. All others seem to me but the trappings of religion. There lies its heart!"

"Shall you remain long in Italy?" asked Rosa.

"I do not know. I have no definite plans. Is this your hotel, Miss Thornton?"

"Yes, will you not come in?" she said, looking up into his face. She could not help that look. Recollections of the old life had crowded back upon her mind, and with them came the memory of the old pain. She could not have explained the strange sentiment which she felt for Mr. Livingstone. She could not dislike him, and yet she felt as if he had robbed her life of its morning bloom.

"No, I cannot come in, thank you. Good-night!"

"Good-night!" returned Rosa. As she went slowly up the stairs which led to Helena's apartment, she said to her own heart: "Would to God I had never seen him!"

Mr. Livingstone turned back to Mary's hotel, for he knew she was awaiting him, and it was yet early. He knocked at her door, but she did not hear him. He opened it—there sat Mary, her face buried in her hands!—she had been weeping! Hearing his step, she looked up suddenly, and instinctively he drew back.

"Come in, Ernest!" she said, "I am glad you returned. Come and sit down by me—I want to speak to

you." He drew a chair close to hers. "Ernest!" she said, looking fixedly in his face, "there is but one person in the world whom I entirely trust—I mean by that, who I know would never fail me—whose honor could not swerve! Remember this, that I will never accept your pity. I am strong enough not to need it. I love you—it were vain to deny it—and now answer me, as you will answer at the last day—Do you love me wholly? Is there no image of another rising now, as it has risen in the past, between us? I appeal to your honor for an answer."

Mr. Livingstone turned pale. He was silent.


"Ernest, speak to me! My eternal happiness hangs on what you say—but not my eternal misery—so much I promise you!"

"Mary," he said, "I am no dastard. I hold the truth good to be told, no matter what pain it carries with it. I have done you—but unwittingly—a great wrong! I have loved another ever since my eyes lighted on her face; but believe that this which I now say to you I never said before, even to myself. I have never consciously feigned an affection I did not feel!"

"Thank you," she said, after a moment's silence, "I believe you, and my heart feels lighter than it has felt for months!" She held out her hand, "I will be your friend," she said. He took her hand in his, and pressed it reverently to his lips. "Good-night," she said, "and remember that it will be my happiest hour when you come to me and say, 'Mary, I am happy!'"

A tear fell from Ernest's eyes on the hand which he still held in his. Mary smiled up at him, "Good-night," she repeated, "and God bless you, Ernest."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HE next day Mary called on Rosa. She had said to Ernest, "I will be your friend!" and she had determined that she would be so in the truest sense of the word. She was ushered into the countess's *salon*, where she found Rosa alone. Rosa was somewhat pale, but as she came forward quickly to meet her visitor, Mary thought she had never seen her look more beautiful. "I do not wonder," she said to herself, while a pang shot through her heart, "I do not wonder that he loves her."

"You see I am prompt to fulfill my promise," Mary said. "I felt an irresistible desire to see you again, and, indeed, since the first night I saw you, I have been strangely drawn to you. I had a prophetic instinct that I should one day know you."

"And yet," answered Rosa, smiling, "nothing, in those days, was more improbable! Do you know I cannot bear to look back—not that I am ashamed of my past life, but the remembrance of the pain I suffered for years weighs on my spirit like a nightmare."

"That is natural," said Mary; "it is hard to have the recollections of years so fraught with pain: one would erase them utterly."

"Ever since I received your letter," said Rosa, "in which you spoke of your engagement to Mr. Livingstone,

I have fancied that we should meet again." Rosa felt relieved when she had said these words. It had cost her a struggle to utter them.

Mary drew a long breath. She, too, was glad Rosa had spoken. She had promised herself not to go before she had explained the precise state of her relations with Mr. Livingstone. But when would she find the courage to speak? How could she pronounce his name? How approach a topic fraught with such acute suffering? But Rosa had led the way, and she must go on! Her heart was beating fast and loud, and it seemed impossible to her that her voice should not betray her agitation. Presently, however, with a quietness that astonished herself, she said:

"I am not engaged to Mr. Livingstone."

Rosa looked up quickly, but did not speak. Mary understood her glance of questioning surprise, and replied to it. "When I wrote you," she said, "I was engaged to him, but that was long ago. Mr. Livingstone is one of my best and truest friends, and, I trust, will ever remain such. That," she said, smiling, "is the only engagement which exists between us."

For a moment Rosa felt bewildered. She heard strange music in her ears, and the words, "He is free, then!" were sounding and resounding in her heart.

"You look incredulous!" said Mary, "but I speak the truth!"

"Oh, no! But I confess you surprise me, finding you both in Italy just as I had often hoped to meet you."

Mary colored. To conceal her embarrassment she was fain to speak of other things. She looked around her. "How quiet you are here—and you are to exchange

this for the stage, to-night? Who, seeing your composure, would believe that in a few hours you will be the cynosure of every eye—that the applause of the city will be at your command!”

“But thou hast chosen the better part,” Rosa answered, smiling. “Believe me, the heart prospers no more amidst this clamor for success, than can flowers grow in the dust of the city. A tranquil life is where the sweetest virtues bloom—and that portion will be yours! You will go to the theatre and see me play, this evening, will you not?”

“That, I regret to say, will not be in my power, for I leave Florence this afternoon!”

“Oh, I am very sorry! I supposed, when I saw you yesterday, that you were fixed in Florence for some time. Shall you be long away?”

“No, I am going, for a few weeks, to Rome—to some American friends who are staying there.”

Rosa wondered whether Mr. Livingstone would be one of the party—but she only said:

“And in a few weeks you will return? Who knows—I may still be here. Unhappily, I cannot foresee my movements, for they depend but little on myself.”

“Might I have the pleasure, before I go,” said Mary, “of seeing your friend, the countess? It would give me pleasure to make the acquaintance of one who is so dear to you!”

“You will pardon my not disturbing her,” said Rosa, “she is not at all well of late. I forgot that yesterday, when I asked you to come and see her. Every day since we left Genoa, her spirits have become more depressed. Sometimes I fear she has made too great a sacrifice of her

tastes and habits, for I am sure she misses keenly her home, with all its associations."


"I can perfectly understand that," said Mary, with a deep sigh. "It is natural." She rose.

"Do not leave me," said Rosa, beseechingly, "you do not know how lonesome I am—how little companionship I have! It has been such a delight to meet you, and now must we part so soon?"

"We shall meet again," said Mary; "I feel sure that the kind waves of destiny will throw us together again. Nothing, I believe, is accidental in this world. Good-by!"—and she drew Rosa toward her, and kissed her.

"Farewell!" said Rosa, affectionately, returning her embrace. "Remember, I shall look for you impatiently every day, until you come."

CHAPTER XXIX.

N the same evening during which poor Mary was being borne away from the being she most loved on earth, Rosa made her *début* on the Florentine stage. She achieved a success complete as that which crowned her first effort at Genoa.

The question she had asked herself all day—Will Mr. Livingstone be there, or has he, too, left Florence? was soon answered. She had not been long upon the stage before she distinguished his face. He was far off, at the furthest corner of the theatre, but she could see that his eyes followed her every motion. But, alas! she could not answer his gaze. They were separated, as they ever were, by a thousand barriers. As she went to her coach, after the play was over, she glanced around in the hope of seeing him—but in vain, and that night Rosa felt more lonely than ever.

The countess had been accustomed to accompany her to and from the theatre, and afterward, before retiring for the night, they would talk over the events of the evening. Of late, she had ceased to do this, and the omission had given her young friend great pain. Especially during the last few days which they had passed at Florence, had the countess withdrawn from the society of her *protégée*.

Rosa did not believe that Helena's interest in her suc-

cess was less fervent, but she had remarked that the restlessness of manner, always noticeable in the countess, had greatly grown upon her. Was it that the excitement of Rosa's *début* fairly over, all the painful recollections of her former life had returned to vex and plague her? All was conjecture—what ailed her friend, Rosa knew not—but she longed, she yearned to comfort her.

Sometimes, on her return from the theatre, Rosa would send their maid to bed, and then, sleepless with apprehension, steal on tiptoe to the countess's room, to listen if all were quiet there. Once she heard a suppressed moan, which made her heart ache, and would have drawn her instantly to her friend's side—but there was in Helena, when most troubled, a repelling dignity which made sympathy seem intrusion. It was as if she said, "Leave me to myself; I am strong enough to suffer alone."

They were seated together one evening at this period, when, after a protracted silence, Rosa, whose eyes had been bent upon her book, while her thoughts were busy with her friend, glancing up, suddenly beheld such a look of anguish on Helena's face, that she threw her book aside, and going over to the countess—"Dear signora," she said, "I can bear no longer to witness your suffering and feel myself powerless to console you. Oh, speak to me; tell me, I entreat you, what it is that renders you so unhappy? Some great trouble, I am sure, weighs on your mind. At night, as I have passed your door, I have listened with a throbbing heart to your low sighs. Oh, pardon me, it is because I truly love you that I have so longed to thrust open the door which divided us, and

say, 'Be comforted, you are not alone!' But I have not dared. In vain have I asked myself a thousand questions. Is she ill? Has she grown cold to me? Can she imagine that my poor success could veil her assured laurels? Signora—if you love me—speak to me!"

Helena shook her head—a groan escaped her. It spoke of so much pent-up misery, that Rosa could restrain herself no longer, and cast her arms about her friend.

"Oh, signora!" she said, "it will kill you to suffer alone. Let me enter, at least, the outer chamber of your heart—I do not ask to look into its grave!"

"A grave!" said Helena, shuddering. "Yes, there is indeed a grave!"

"Keep that closed from me forever, if you will," said Rosa, clasping her hands, "but do not refuse my sympathy. I should feel less lonely if I might divide your sorrows with you."

"Look there!" said Helena, taking from her bosom a large locket set in brilliants. "There lies the secret of my guilt—of my eternal misery! which no tears can wash away—no time can heal!" She handed Rosa a miniature of a young man. Rosa gazed in wonder at its beauty. The features were perfect in their regularity; the hair was parted in waving brown locks upon a fair brow; the fringed gentian could not rival his eyes; and the lips, shaded by delicate mustaches, were full and red.

Helena watched with jealous solicitude the impression made on Rosa by the picture. "Is he not beautiful?" she said, under her breath.

"He is, indeed, beautiful!—was he your husband?"

"He was my husband."

"Did he die?" Rosa asked, for she knew nothing of Helena's history so far as it was concerned with her married life.

"He died," said Helena, slowly; "I killed him!"

"What do you mean, signora?" gasped Rosa.

"I mean—that I murdered him!"

Rosa's eyes were fastened upon her friend's face, as if they would penetrate her soul.

"I am not insane," continued Helena; "I destroyed that beauty before the worms could get at it. They prey in vain upon my darling now. Oh, Mimo! oh, Mimo! Pardon, pardon!" she cried, sinking on her knees before the picture, and pressing it passionately to her lips. "I will tell you all, Rosa! I shall go mad if I do not speak. No priest holds my secret—nor ever shall. Before I killed him, I was a Catholic—then I ceased to be anything. Man cannot give absolution to a lost soul. Not even God would absolve me! It was for him alone to take the life he gave, but I would not await his will. I closed those eyes. I stilled those lips forever. I blotted out a life before its time." Her breath went and came convulsively—"I sent that soul to judgment before God summoned it."

"Signora, for pity's sake, calm yourself!" cried Rosa, who felt her own blood freezing in her veins.

"Speak not to me of calm. I know no calm—a surging restlessness, a gnawing agony, a low moan ever in my heart, on my lips silence—that is my endless doom! Rosa, I loved him—do you know what it is to love?—all the meaning that lies in that one word?

"I tell you that I never heard his footstep but my heart leapt, like a thing alive, to meet it; his voice never

sounded in my ear but it thrilled like lightning through me; I never saw him without loving him more deeply, dearly, than before. I loved his beauty, his mind, his soul, all things in him, and about him. The very air he breathed was nectar to me.

"Ah, many had admired—many had courted me! No one satisfied me. So I gave pain for weariness, contented to receive little and bestow nothing. Then he came—and my past heartlessness was chastized, and I drank to the dregs the cup of woe which I had commended to others' lips. The lees are bitter, Rosa! It was here, in Florence, that we met. Oh, it has done me good to speak. It has cooled the fire here!" She put her hand to her head. "I can never free myself from the memory of that night when I saw him first. It haunts me! I was playing 'The Deserted Physician'—you will act the same part one day, and then I will come once more to the theatre, and, looking upon you, dream over that sweet dream."

"Tell me, signora," said Rosa, seeking to change the direction of the countess's thoughts, "tell me something of the part you played in that drama."

"I cannot recall it," she answered, in a hollow voice; "it is blurred before my mind, it was all real to me then. I remember only that Salvini was the physician whose wife had abandoned him—that I had thrown myself on my knees to implore his forgiveness; that in my agony, my head fell unconsciously upon his foot. He withdrew it, as if something had stung him. I heard a groan; it came from some one among the audience. I looked up, and beheld—for the first time—his face! He had been standing near the orchestra, at my right—he was start-

ing forward, his eyes fixed intently on my features. The expression of his face pierced my heart like a knife. Oh, God! I see and feel it still!" She paused a moment, and then proceeded. "I felt my strength fail me in that moment. Throughout the remainder of the act, I knew that look was pursuing me, although I did not dare to glance at him again. The curtain fell, as Salvini afterward told me, amid applause, but I heard nothing. I was called out, and above the reiterated 'Bis!—Bis! I heard one 'Brava!' I could hardly go through with the last act—the death of the heroine occurs in the last scene. Oh, it comes back to me now! that my last words, as I sank into Salvini's arms, were—'Thank God I am not alone!'

"As soon as the act was finished, I hastened to my room, begging Salvini to excuse me to the public. He came to my dressing-room soon afterward, with his arms full of flowers. Among these, was a bunch of forget-me-nots. Attached to this, I found a card, inscribed, 'No, thou art not alone!' Salvini escorted me, as was his custom, to my carriage. We passed to it through a group of young men. He was there. I inclined my head. His flowers were in my hand.

"The next morning, Count Malaspina called. •Never have I seen so beautiful a man. To beauty of person he united grace of manner and infinite charm of conversation. He had everything that could take captive a woman's imagination. When he left me that day my heart was no longer in my keeping.

"The count was not rich—as for me, I was supported by my profession. He was noble—I was of humble birth. But we loved one another—I loved him to

madness—and we were betrothed. For me, the earth was transfigured from that hour; all the air was filled with fragrance and sunlight; the very birds sang louder and more gladly than before! Life was so sweet!—so sweet! When I acted, I felt inspired, a sacred fire burned within me, the public greeted me every night with new enthusiasm.

“We were married! Married! What curse lay in that word to turn my bliss to gall? I sat at his feet, and told him how I worshiped him, and all day long drank in his beauty. I kissed his violet tinted eyes when he slept—he was my Endymion!

“But, after a time, he grew harsh—unkind. He was jealous of me. Everything I did upon the stage—every word, every glance—he caviled at. I was no longer free. I feared to move, to think, to feel. Then gradually I lost my inspiration. I was so weary with weeping—so racked by his constant reproaches, that often, when night came, I was unable to go through my part. Salvini acted with all his powers, but if he approached, I shrank from him. I could put no passion in my words, lest Mimo should misinterpret them. I could see the angry look in his eyes, and I recoiled from it.

“Then I threw myself at Mimo’s feet, and told him that I loved him only. Gladly would I abandon my profession if he wished. What was the world’s admiration to his love? But he turned coldly away, and bid me do as I chose. I grew like marble—and, naturally, the public grew cold. One day, after such a scene with Mimo, I went to Salvini, and told him I would never act again. He was indignant, and never spoke to me till I sent for

him, as you know, in Genoa. I took no formal farewell of the public which had honored me, but that night the name of Helena Ortelli was struck from the bills.

"For several days the journals expressed regret, and the hope that my decision was not final, and my husband's friends were quite incredulous, knowing that Malaspina's income was small.

"Meanwhile, from Mimo's lips, I heard no word of praise or blame; he seemed to ignore altogether the step I had taken, and all it had cost me. His indifference cut me to the soul. To him I had sacrificed my art. For him I had accepted poverty—and no expression of interest—not a sign of gratitude!—no thanks! Oh, God, the agony I suffered! In the solitude of my chamber I cried aloud, for I could not bear the oppression of my heart. His very beauty had grown a pain to me! and yet he looked so beautiful! I grew dull and taciturn. I wept. I grew ugly, I suppose. I shut myself up, and refused to receive my friends.

"Then he began to absent himself from home. I heard he went frequently to the house of a certain noble lady, whose name, I remembered, had, before his marriage, been coupled with his own. But he had spoken carelessly of her to me, so that, hitherto, I had felt no jealousy. Nor do I think he ever loved her, but he needed pastime, and he loved, I think, to torture me. I had made myself too thoroughly his slave. He had begun to feel the *ennui* of absolute sovereignty, and the very earnestness of my love annoyed him." She paused, and caught her breath.

"Oh, Rosa," she cried, while her words came convulsively, "help me!—comfort me! Oh, God! Oh, my

God! I was wild with grief! How shall I tell you!—Listen!

“A great pestilence was raging in the city. I thought—I thought—if it smote Mimo—it would rob him of his fatal beauty. Then none but I would love him; but I would nurse and foster, and love him, and make him mine—always mine!”

As Helena said this, she lifted her large eyes, which might have belonged to a disembodied spirit, so weirdly did their fierce light contrast with her ashen features.

“Yes!” she continued, gazing fixedly before her—“Yes, I thought that! And day and night the thought racked my brain, until it became a mania. I scanned his features eagerly. If his cheek were flushed—was it not a sign of fever? Was he pale—then I thought, with exultation in my heart, this may be the herald of the plague. But no, he was always well. He would not sicken!”

“One day, it happened that I was called by a poor woman in great distress, to see her baby. I had often seen her scrubbing the floor behind the scenes of the theatre, and given her some money as I passed, and felt how wide the contrast was between us. She wiped the place where my feet trod. She had never forgotten me, and now, in her trouble, her heart turned to me.

“I went with her, and found the child moaning on its bed, its little body scarlet with fever, and broken out with sores. There was a strange odor in the room, which made me feel faint, and running to the window, I flung it open. ‘Go for a physician,’ I said, ‘for my doctor—Doctor Anfossi! He is good and kind; tell him that I want him, and he will come!’”

"The poor mother ran frantically for the doctor, while I watched by the little baby's side. Within half an hour the doctor came, and bending a moment over the baby, looked up hastily at me.

"Go away instantly!" he said, sternly. "Do you know what this is?—It is the pestilence!"

"A dizziness came over me—I lingered.

"Go!" he repeated.

"My handkerchief had fallen on the crib, one of the child's little fevered hands rested on it. I stooped and took it, then hastened home.

"I went into my lonely room. I looked around. There were Mimo's dressing-case, his coat, his embroidered slippers, his cigar-case; everything was associated with him! How dear he was to me—but how little happiness he had brought me! How my life had changed since it had been joined to his! Would he ever look on me again as he once did, and say again in those tones that thrilled me still, 'Helena, I adore thee!' Oh, if I could chain him to me by any tie—by gratitude—tenderness—if not by love! Oh, that I might once more call up his soul into his eyes, and die in its light!

"Perhaps—as it was—I should die! Had I not been exposed to the dreaded pestilence? If it should attack me, he would shun me, for he hated sickness—his flesh would shrink from contact with mine! I should not lie in his arms in my last agony, and hear him whisper, 'Forgive me, Helena!' I should not hold him in the grave. He would live in all his beauty, and the world teach him to forget me.

"Never! A thought—the terrible thought, which had haunted me so long—flashed through my brain! Could

I wish?—Yes—I wished that *he* might be stricken down; that thus, at least, he might become wholly mine! The tempter knocked loudly at my heart; I opened and let him in. I crossed the room, and smoothed his pillow, kissed and wet it with my tears, and then—I placed upon it the handkerchief which the little child had held; there it lay all day.

“When, by and by, I heard Mimo’s step, I was like one drunk with excitement. He came in, hastily, but as he looked at me, he paused—‘How beautiful you are, Helena,’ he said. ‘Your eyes are flame! You look as you did when you played Medea!’

“‘I wish,’ I answered, moodily, ‘that I had been—not an actress, but an opera singer!’

“‘Why,’ said he, ‘you were great as an actress!’

“‘I do not know,’ I replied; ‘I fancy the part of Norma would have suited me well. I should like to have sung just once these words—“In the grave, in the grave thou shalt lie with me still!”’

“‘And me, I suppose,’ he answered, smiling, ‘you would have destined to the cruel Roman’s enviable end.’

“I did not speak, but turned away. All that day he was kinder to me than usual. When night came on, I took away the handkerchief, and let him sleep upon the pillow. But with the morning light a nameless terror fell upon me. No sooner had he left the house than I rushed to his chamber, flung wide open the windows, and drenched the room with perfumes. All day I knew no rest. I paced that room, listening for his footstep. I was mad with a thousand fears.

“When at last he returned, he seemed well and happy—happier than he had been for many weeks, and his

manner was gentler than its wont. Several days passed, and I had began to feel repose steal back upon my heart, when—Rosa!”—her eyes opened with a wild glare—“he sickened suddenly! Oh, God, *he* sickened—and I was well. Had he suspected, I think it would have been a comfort to my soul, but he little dreamed what ailed him, and made light of his illness. He grew rapidly worse—and worse.

“‘Kiss me, Helena!’ he would whisper; ‘stoop down and kiss me, sweet! I love you; I have always loved you. Forgive my cruelty, beloved!’

“Presently he grew silent, then unconscious—the disease had tightened its clutch upon its victim. Gone was the beauty which others had admired; but he, whom I worshiped so madly, lay there mine—all mine!

“I hung over him—kissed his poor swollen lips—I breathed the polluted atmosphere. In vain, I could not take the malady—in irony it spared me! Wildly I called him by his name—he could not answer me—he could no more lift his eyes to mine!

“Rosa, Rosa! I had never dreamed that this might come! Strange!—I had pictured everything, save this! It came at last—death! All was silent now. That noble form which had moved in gracious ways before me, would stir no more. Dead—and I had killed him! Under the earth—not even there—should he be with me. He was lost to me in the grave—and beyond it—in that awful hereafter! It was this thought, and this only, which kept me from self-murder! I would wear out my day of torture on the lonely earth, and seek to expiate, if God would suffer me, my guilt, and

then—claim him—not in heaven,” she said, shuddering, “but in the grave.

“But the fire rages ever within me. I have found no rest for my weary soul—no rest in this world—what if I find none hereafter! Oh, my God! I love him still!—Wildly as I loved him then!” She put out her hands, as if for help. Rosa took them in her own. “You know all now,” whispered Helena. “You can no longer love me. Pity me, my child!”

“Oh, Helena!—let me call you by that name!—My friend, my creator! You shall not say I cannot love you—I who love you with my whole heart. Oh, Helena,” she cried, laying her fresh cheek on that burning brow, “let me cool it—let me give you rest! Lean your head here, sweet!”

Helena started, then burst into a paroxysm of tears. They were the first she had shed for years. “Sweet!” she repeated, “I had not heard that word since it fell from his lips. It came from him but rarely. At the first—then at the last! It comes to my ear like the echo of far music. Rosa,” she said, breathlessly, “do you think me a murderess?”

“No, no! dearest! Do not talk so wildly! You frighten me. I love you. I shall always love you. But I would have you seek help from one stronger than I. Tell me, Helena, do you ever pray God to help you?”

“I am afraid to ask anything of God,” she answered. “I dare not pray!”

“He is merciful!” said Rosa, clasping her hands tenderly around Helena’s head. Her voice was low and tremulous.

"He is just," said Helena, in hollow tones, that struck dolefully on Rosa's ear.

Rosa continued, gently, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she has loved much."

Helena shook her head, and answered mournfully, "For the hypocrite, Christ said there should be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

"But, Helena, did he not also say, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?' and 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted?' Oh, my friend, what sacred consolation, what sweet repose breathes throughout those words! Be comforted by them."

"'Blessed are the merciful,'" Helena murmured, "'for they shall obtain mercy.' What hope is there then for me—have I been merciful?"

"Dearest, he who died for us will not judge as man judges. He reads every secret of your heart, he has witnessed its penitence and sorrow. I, too, have known sorrow—sorrow I could ill have borne without his help."

"You?" cried Helena, with the instinctive arrogance of grief, looking up at the fresh young face. Then her mood changed. She turned away her head, and said, "The great lesson of sorrow you may have learned early as I learned it late. But you know not this anguish—this agony of mine! What can the innocent know of suffering?"

"Dear Helena," Rosa interposed, "upon one thing I am determined. You must not oppose me! We will leave this place. It has become hateful to me since I have known it to be painful to you! I will break my contract with Salvini rather than remain!"

"By no means!" returned Helena, earnestly roused for a moment from her personal grief by Rosa's proposition. "No, Rosa, that must not be. Circumstances will not always bend to our wishes. The latter ought sometimes to yield."

"But they will not," said Rosa, "We cannot forget! I tell you, Helena, that you must not stay in Florence."

"Wherever I go," returned Helena, "I drag my chain. Remember, Rosa, that Salvini is all powerful on the Italian stage. Your future success depends largely on his support. Should you now thwart his plans, he might refuse to act with you again."

"And if he do," said Rosa, "I care not; but he must and shall listen to me," and without giving the countess time for further protest, she ran out of the room.

CHAPTER XXX.



ROSA at this time had been acting for two months on the Florentine stage, and the enthusiasm which had first greeted her had not slackened. It is not often that an Italian audience is so constant, but Rosa's youth, beauty, and positive genius had combined to captivate their fickle affections, and installed her as the favorite of the season. Even young girls raved about her, and young men might be seen at all hours roving hopelessly beneath her windows, or vying with each other, when she drove in the Cascini, in feats of gallant horsemanship.

The stage was nightly strewn with flowers, while from the boxes were let down mammoth bouquets, too mighty for her grasp. Rosa could not be insensible to such homage, and it was a natural reluctance to surrender it which made it painful for her to leave Florence. Yet often she had murmured to herself—

“My heart is lonely in the midst of triumph. I would rather have one kind look from his eyes, than the applause of Italy!”

Why he never came to see her was a problem she could not solve, but daily pondered. Since that evening when she had met him in Miss Marlboro's apartment, she had never seen him face to face. But she knew he was in Florence, for during those eight weeks he had never failed to be present when she appeared upon the stage.

Yes, while the rest of the audience seemed as faces seen dimly in a mist, she never failed to distinguish him. Let him sit ever so far back in the theatre, her glance would find him out.

Once, from the flowers flung upon the stage, she had selected instinctively a bunch of tea-roses, divining from whose hand they came, for they were twin-sisters of those he had offered her when they parted in New York. Were these, too, she had asked herself, the token of a second, and a sadder separation? But this time she had banished herself. Yes, she must leave Florence.

It was with a bitter pang that Rosa had left Helena's room, and sought refuge in her own chamber. There she kneeled and prayed—not a prayer to be found in the pages of any litany, but a humble and plain petition—the prayer of a little child. She asked her father in heaven to pity her poor friend, to pour balm upon that spirit which had been so grievously wounded, to help her to forget herself and her selfish desires for Helena's dear sake, and sacrifice her own heart to the sore need of another.

She felt calmer when she rose, but the weight was not lifted from her heart: she must leave the city where he was! Strange that she should find it harder to leave him now than it had been two years before, when she had seen him more intimately, and when an ocean was about to divide them, it seemed forever! Now the world smiled upon her, a brilliant career had opened to her, fame and fortune lay in her grasp—and he was at least on the same continent. For all this it seemed to her that they were about to be more hopelessly separated than ever.

Rosa nevertheless did not flinch from that which she believed to be her duty. She went to Salvini, and told him that she could not remain in Florence. In vain he sought to reason with her. She was deaf to his arguments. At length, because he felt that he could not act without her, he yielded to her wishes. It was agreed accordingly that on the succeeding evening they should take leave of the Florentines.

"Two nights more!" she murmured, as Salvini closed the door behind her; "but two nights more, and I shall have seen him for the last time." Rosa passed a restless day, keeping aloof from Helena, for she would not have the latter guess what a struggle her decision had cost her, and she feared her scrutinizing eye. When at length the evening came, she felt by no means equal to her task, but under the pressure of feverish excitement, succeeded in going through her part.

She passed a wakeful night, and it was late when she arose, pale and dejected. Would he not come to-day, and take leave of her? His indifference was cruel, was unmannerly—and yet, were he really indifferent, would he come every evening to the theatre, and follow with hungry eyes every movement of hers? He must know that now more than ever she had need of his friendship; at any rate he had no right to ignore common civility. These musings were broken by a knock at the door. Was it he? Her heart beat fast. No; a card was presented to her—it was that of Mary Marlboro. Completing her toilette speedily, she hastened to the drawing-room, and whatever disappointment might be lurking in her heart, she was sincerely delighted to see Mary again. As Mary rose and came forward, she lifted

her veil, and Rosa could hardly suppress an exclamation of sad surprise at the change which a few weeks' absence had made in her friend's appearance. The latter did indeed look pale and delicate, and the old animation had quite faded from her eyes. Rosa's look did not escape Mary's notice, who said quickly.

"I have come back, it seems, just in time! This is your last appearance in Florence. But I shall see you once upon the stage—a pleasure I have longed for!"

"I have missed you sadly," said Rosa; "why did you postpone your return so long?"

"I was with friends who had never visited Rome. Every one, I suppose, lingers longer in the Eternal City than he intends."

"And now," said Rosa with a sigh, "now that you have returned, I must go away!"

"And I too," said Mary, "leave Florence to-morrow. My only motive in coming at all was to see you once more."

"Where do you go?" asked Rosa.

"My aunt—and the friends whom I have been with lately—have formed a party to go up the Nile! I am to join them to-morrow."

"You are going to Egypt! Oh, how far away! I envy you. There is nothing I should like better than the silence of those great deserts!"

"You!" said Mary, "Solitude should have no charms for you. You belong to the world!"

"To the world. Yes!" said Rosa, "as the slave belongs to his master!"

"But surely, you do not complain of your brilliant prospect? You love your work?"

"Yes," said Rosa, with a blush of pride, "I do love it. Creation in any form is god-like! Poets, painters, sculptors, all have creative souls; out of the chaos and darkness round them they call forth light and life. This is our mission also, though in a far humbler way. We give color and reality to what had been depicted indeed to the imagination, but now gains for the first time an existence for the senses. Is it not so?"

"Yes," said Mary, looking at her with admiration, "yours is truly the art of Pygmalion!"

"But you paint!" continued Rosa; "in your art you can idealize, and therefore it is far nobler than ours. Besides the medium in which we work, to which we address ourselves, is the taste and memory of our coevals—a medium far more perishable than canvas. You can arrest and hold what would otherwise be fleeting. The silent approbation of the world is a surer seal of your success than the deafening but transitory applause with which our triumphs are proclaimed."

Mary did not answer. She took up a book of poems which lay upon the table, and turning over the leaves: "Some of these are very pretty," she said; then added carelessly, with her eyes still on the book, "Have you seen Mr. Livingstone of late?"

"I have not seen him," Rosa answered, turning pale, and conscious that her heart was beating painfully, "since the evening I passed with you. That was long ago!"

"Not since I went away! How strange," murmured Mary, almost inaudibly.

"I do not find it strange. Mr. Livingstone, although he prides himself on his republican descent, is at heart

the coldest of aristocrats. Our Italian noblemen are not half so proud, nor do they make us feel so painfully the difference in our birth!"

Mary smiled sadly. "I know no man," she answered loyally, "more utterly free from prejudice of that kind than Mr. Livingstone. He has too much genuine nobility to prize that which derives its importance merely from accident."

"It may be so. I know him too slightly to judge of his character! How deserted the streets look to-day!" Rosa said, glancing out at the window.

Mary rose; she took both Rosa's hands in hers. "Good-by!" she said, "I shall see you to-night—but only at a distance—and, afterward, not for a long, long time! Do not forget me! It will console me to think that you sometimes remember me! God bless you!" As she drew Rosa to her and kissed her, the tears stood in her eyes.

"You were the first person—" Rosa paused. Her face was scarlet—"I mean almost the first person who was disinterestedly kind to me. There is no likelihood, believe me, that I shall ever forget you."

When Mary, returning from her visit to Rosa, opened the door of her apartment, the first thing which met her eyes was a letter! It was from Cecilia. Interesting as her sister's letters always were, Mary little dreamed how completely all her projects for the future might be changed after reading this. It ran thus:

"DEAREST MARY, MY BELOVED SISTER:—

"Come back to us. I need you; Henry misses you; baby cries for you. Only yesterday the little fellow

stopped in the middle of his play, and running up to me, leaned his elbow on my knees, and looking up in my face with a troubled expression, said :

“ ‘ Aunt Mary don’t love little Harry any more.’ ”

“ ‘ Why so ? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ Because,’ he answered, in baby accents, ‘ if she did love little Harry, she would come and see him.’ ”

“ Let your conscience answer if it be right to sow the first seeds of doubt in that infant mind. I have received your last letter, in which you opened your heart to me. It is the same heart which I have known and trusted for years, and which ever beats responsive to all that is noble and true. I can only say, in answer, that what you did was right. You will reap your reward ; not, perhaps, where we short-sighted ones look for it, but there, where a voice shall bless with uttering : ‘ It was well done ! ’ ”

“ Dear Mary, happiness no longer seems to me, as it once did, the one aim and object of living. No, not even the most perfect happiness which this earth can give, and which is mine in such large measure. To whom, think you, do I owe so much philosophy ? Is it to my husband, who gave me sight by tearing off the bandage of prejudice (I once thought somewhat rudely) from my eyes ? or to my baby, who came like a little angel to dip its wings in the troubled waters of my heart ? or to myself, who beheld a gulf widening daily between me and what I held most dear, and labored, tearfully, prayerfully, to bridge it over ? ”

“ Something it may have been of all of these ; but most I owe to my dear, dear sister. She it was who put in my hand that key which locks fast restlessness and misery,

and opens wide the doors of happiness and hope. I mean—work. Yes, in working for others, I forgot self-introspection; I found wholesome forgetfulness of self! I have become, indeed, such an advocate of labor, which I proclaim a panacea, that even Henry laughs at me, and protests I shall have poor little Hal in the traces before his time. It would, indeed, prove the sincerity of my principles if I applied them to my own little Isaac, would it not?

“But, dearest, to hear of the good you have done must not suffice you. You must come to see and prove, lest without you I fail under the final test. And then, after all, Mary, is not home the best place for you? Think of all the love which awaits you here, and turn your steps homeward!

“As for your painting, surely Raphael and Correggio never had lovelier models than my little Hal. You must not fancy that it is a mother’s partiality which speaks. If his aunty could see him, she would agree with me! My letter must end, as it begins, with a single prayer: Come back to us, dear, dear sister! Write me, immediately, what you decide to do. Henry sends his best love, and joins in my petition; so does baby, with a kiss.

“Your loving sister,

“CECILIA ELLIOT.”

It was with mingled pleasure and pain that Mary read Cecilia’s letter. The restless sorrow in her heart had impelled her to fly from places familiar, it mattered not whither, so she might find distraction, and escape a subject which too fatally engrossed her thoughts. Her

home had been associated with many painful memories, but it had been placed in a new light by Cecilia's loving words. It offered her a haven of rest. Love awaited her there. Much, certainly, was left her in those dear ones who were bound to her by nature's indissoluble tie. She would see her little nephew, and what could be sweeter than to watch the development of that young life, the unfolding of the new-born soul? Although she were not its mother, might she not do much to help the child upward and onward? Yes, we could all aid one another; no human influence was lost.

Long and sorely the girl wrestled with her feelings. Was it well, was it right, to go on repining forever? She did not deceive herself. She saw plain before her the arid waste of a life dedicated to a hopeless love. Would it not be better, nobler, to keep that love enshrined in the silence of her heart, and give her life to an unselfish purpose? She would rouse herself, she resolved now, and vanquish vain regrets. She felt strengthened already by the wholesome resolution, and that night, when she went to see Rosa play, her heart was lighter than it had been for many a day.

Rosa's eyes had early sought Mary in the audience. Mary and Mr. Livingstone, they were the only beings in all that throng whose presence or absence was of consequence to her—whose admiration she really craved. Rosa was acting to-night with more than wonted fervor, and Mary sat entranced, so much absorbed in the scene before her, that for the time she forgot all else.

And now the last act was finished. Rosa, called repeatedly before the curtain, made a pretext of gathering some of the flowers which had been showered upon the

stage, that she might give Mary, whom she had soon distinguished in the crowd, one farewell glance. At this moment, she saw the door of Mary's box open and Mr. Livingstone enter. Then all seemed mist before her eyes; the bouquet she was holding dropped from her hand. Forgetting that Salvini was waiting to escort her, she lifted hastily the heavy folds of the curtain, and retired. Mary saw the movement, but did not detect the motive. At that moment, a familiar voice addressed her. She started, and turned to welcome it. Then it was that the cause of Rosa's agitation flashed across her. She understood it now too well.

It was some time before the public enthusiasm subsided, but in vain men waved their handkerchiefs, shouting, "Brava! brava!" Rosa was inexorable, and tired at last with useless demonstration, the audience dispersed.

Mr. Livingstone accompanied Mary to her door, and before they separated, she told him of her resolution to return to America. He pressed her hand reverently to his lips, and as they bade farewell to one another, each of them felt more lonely and weary at heart.

CHAPTER XXXI.



ALVINI'S next engagement was at Milan, whither Helena and Rosa now turned their steps. Rosa's heart was far from light, but she made it a principal aim to conceal from the countess her despondency. Not seldom, however, she found her friend's eyes fixed piercingly upon her, as if they meant to spell the secret of her heart. At such moments, the blood mounted unbidden to Rosa's brow, and the look which answered her friend's gaze carried with it a mute entreaty to desist. Helena never complained of ill-health, but there were times when Rosa fancied—and the idea gave her infinite pain—that the countess had of late grown much weaker.

It was without much interest—certainly without excitement—that Rosa made preparation for her *début* in Milan. It grieved her to perceive that her heart could so early and so easily grow faint in her career. What! so young—her laurels yet so fresh—her tender life so newly covered with success and fame. Was inspiration already failing? Were the brilliant blossoms that lay strewn so thickly in her path all withered?—were they so quickly dead? For the work which Mr. Livingstone had done—her pride confessed it now—she loved, at once, and hated him.

“And by this hatred,” she suddenly said to herself,

"I will again kindle the fires which he has extinguished within me. It shall never be with me as it has been with unhappy Helena. No man shall have power to kill what God has quickened. I promised to avenge her wrongs, and I will not myself fall a victim!"

Rosa did not fail to arouse at Milan the same enthusiasm which had greeted her elsewhere. But she retired on the first night of her appearance dissatisfied and disheartened. What was applause to her, if conscience told her it was undeserved? She had not *felt* her rôle that evening; she had been stirred by no inward fire. Where, then, was the true artist? Was there, after all, nothing in her soul that would proclaim itself, and that deserved proclaiming? Was it only the admiration of one person which had power to call forth her genius? Then it was no genius. Where, then, were Helena's dreams for her pupil? Where was her own faith in work? And her ideals, whither had they vanished? She felt terrified at her listlessness. She must save herself, or all was lost.

Rosa knew little of the world or its society. Living so long outside the pale of social life, she had come to look on it as a mode of existence with which she could have nothing in common. But now her mind turned to it as a refuge. She had tried public life—that was cold; there were no points of sympathy or contact with others there. She would seek her fellow-creatures. They had looked to her for enjoyment—let them minister as well as receive!

"Helena," she said, suddenly, as they sat in silence together one day, a week after her appearance in Milan, "I want a change."

Helena opened wide her eyes.

"Yes," said Rosa, "I wish to see the world—to mingle with it. I would go to the balls to which we are asked; accept all our invitations; receive those who have asked to be presented. I am tired of my self-imposed seclusion. I am young, and I mean to be gay—to be admired and courted, as well off the stage as on it. I require new triumphs—new pleasures."

Helena stared at her. Rosa laughed. Her laugh had the ring of old times. It sounded strange and sad—to Helena's ear.

"Well," said Rosa, as she looked up at Helena, "will you let me go everywhere I wish?"

"Certainly; you are free to do as you please."

"And will you go with me?"

"No; but I will secure some suitable person to matronize you."

"Thank you. And will you go with me to choose my dresses? I wish them to be what you like; you have perfect taste."

"Yes," said Helena, sadly; "I will accompany you. It is hard to refuse you anything."

"Let us start immediately," said Rosa. "I should like to take a drive, and it will be a novel excitement to go about to the shops with you."

"I feel," said Helena, catching her breath, as Rosa left the room, "I feel that I am losing my only child. Who has done this deed?"

Lovely toilettes were chosen, and sent home for Rosa. Meanwhile, Helena had sought out an old friend, a lady of rank, who was very willing to take Rosa under her wing. Helena's marriage had given her the *entrée* to circles where her talents would never have gained ad-

mittance. So it happened that houses which would have been closed to the Signorina Thornton were cheerfully opened to the *protégée* of the Countess Malaspina.

And now Rosa was fairly launched in the social world. Her admirers, who hitherto had worshiped at a distance, were at liberty to approach their divinity. In sober truth, the young actress found herself adored by the *jeunesse dorée* of Lombardy, but she returned each night from fresh conquests with a weary, aching heart. Society had not given her the peace she looked for. The world she had looked forward to as a remedy only palled upon her.

"What is it all worth?" she said to herself, as she loosened from her hair the jewels which Helena had placed there. Yet there was always the restless desire to drink deeper and deeper the draught, that it might at length steep her in forgetfulness; this, at least, was her hope.

Helena watched her career with increasing anxiety. "My Rosa cannot be spoiled," she thought, "but there is a canker in my sweet bud; I can but sit with folded hands and watch and wait."

CHAPTER XXXII.



THE spring was beginning to bloom in Italy; the air was full of fragrance; the nights were soft and warm. The French ambassador had come to Milan to visit the great cathedral. A grand *fete* was to be given at the Prince Liciniano's in his honor. Every one who had any title to distinction was invited, and Rosa Thornton, the celebrated actress, was to be one of the attractions of the evening.

The ball had been purposely appointed for a night which intervened between her acting; the prince himself was one of Rosa's most enthusiastic admirers.

The approaching *fete* to be given by the prince was the excitement of the day. All the grand ladies of the city vied with each other in the choice of beautiful and elegant costumes. The prince was a bachelor, and there were few noble mothers whose hearts did not beat high with hope of the future which that evening might open for their daughters.

The hour had arrived; the palace of the prince was one blaze of light; from the rear of the edifice, long flights of marble steps led down to a garden, whose trees were hung with variegated lamps; others sprang from the midst of flowers; silent side paths were left darker in the subdued softness of the moonlight; a lovely miniature lake glittered in the midst of the garden; and

beautiful swans floated noiselessly, like white lilies, on its surface.

It was eleven o'clock before the Countess Carignano, Rosa's chaperon, reached the palace.

The words "It is she," "She has come," flew quickly through the rooms. In a moment more they had thrown off their cloaks in the dressing-room, and the countess on the arm of her husband, Rosa on that of the prince, who had been impatiently waiting for her, entered the grand saloon. There was a hush to the great buzz of voices as they passed, and Rosa turned paler as she grew conscious that every eye was fixed upon her.

She wore a golden-threaded gauze, looped over white satin, fastened with natural white camelias, with their large green leaves shining under them. The same flower was in her jet black hair; no other ornament. Helena had chosen her dress, and had presented it to her. She looked very beautiful, severely beautiful.

It was plain that the prince was absorbed in the young actress; some words he murmured in her ear which made Rosa cast down her eyes and laugh; the music clashed forth; the prince led her to the ball-room. She waltzed first with him; then several of his friends came forward and claimed her hand; she was soon engaged for every dance. The heat grew oppressive.

"Take me," she said to the prince, on whose arm she leaned, "into the garden; it is cooler there." They went out; they stood a moment by the fountain, whose refreshing spray fell on her hand as she stretched it out; they walked on.

"You are exquisitely beautiful to-night," the prince

said, in a low voice. "I am but a poor prince," he continued, "how should a subject dare to address his queen; he alone might aspire to your hand who had a throne to offer."

"I am nothing," said Rosa, "but a poor girl who is truly grateful for the unmerited favor she receives."

"I love you," the prince whispered.

"Do not say that," said Rosa, "you mock me; oh, the air strikes so coldly on me—would it be too much to ask you to get me my opera cloak?"

The prince hurried away; she looked around her; it was quite silent; the hum of voices came like distant echoes; the music was just audible. She turned off into a narrow path; fragrant blossoms hung thick on either side. "How sweet," she murmured to herself. She went on; she turned into another winding path; she came to a marble seat. As she sat down, a nightingale just above her in the thick branches suddenly pierced the silence with his song. "Beautiful creature!" said Rosa, in English.

"Beautiful creature!" was repeated by a low voice near her. She started and looked around.

"Miss Thornton, am I too bold an intruder? I have been lingering here, listening to the nightingale's song. I remember that long ago you loved to hear its sweet notes."

"Oh, Mr. Livingstone!" said Rosa. Her voice trembled; she paused; then she said, "I did not know you were in Milan."

"I came the day after your arrival. I have seen you every night upon the stage. I have followed you everywhere."

“And where—” said Rosa, struggling to conceal her emotion, “where, all this while, have you hidden yourself?” She rose.

“Take my arm,” he said. She took it, and they wandered on in silence they knew not whither. He looked down at her, but her eyes would not meet his own, and he saw that her cheek was colorless. He bent forward. She breathed more quickly.

“Rosa,” he said, “I must speak, I cannot bear this life of misery any longer. I love you. I have loved you ever since the first day we met. I loved you when I was scarcely conscious of it myself; through absence—through separation—”

“Of birth!” said Rosa coldly, as she drew a long breath.

“It is true,” he answered, “I will not deny—”

“And Mary,” Rosa broke in quickly, “what of her?”

“Mary,” he answered, “I have loved tenderly and truly, but never, Rosa, as I have loved you. She is a noble woman, worthy of the highest love that a man can give. She knew of my love for you—and she was generous! Speak to me, Rosa. I know well that you are not now the simple little girl who once needed protection and guidance. I know too well what I must seem to your eyes. You will say that I scorned you then, and now that you are courted and admired by the whole world, I come to take my chance of success with all the rest; that my eye could not see the star that was hidden by the clouds, but discerned it only when its radiance lit the sky; say what you will, but love is love, Rosa, and pain is pain—and believe me, I have suffered deeply, intensely, for your sake!

"It is true—the wife I would have chosen should have kept the fragrance of her life for myself alone. She should have been unknown to the world—its praises unsounded in her ear—my love sufficing her heart.

"But, Rosa, it is all in vain—in vain that one wrestles with his destiny. I lay my heart and soul at your feet. The immense sacrifice I ask I would atone for by the immensity of my love, of my adoration for you. Will not the true, unswerving devotion of a life suffice? The hour must come when the world's applause must cease; but love, my beloved, is immortal."

He paused. There was a stillness in the air so great, it seemed to Rosa as if she could not break it.

He put his arm about her. He heard a suppressed sob: "Speak to me, Rosa, speak," he said, "this silence is too terrible!"

She leaned her head for a moment upon his shoulder. He drew her closer to his breast. Suddenly she freed herself from his arm and stood erect before him. As the moonbeams glimmered through the heavy foliage above them, their silvery light rested on her face, which in the mystic sheen looked pale and still as marble!

"I love you!" she said, in a clear, low voice. "I have loved you during all these years. No admiration, no love, no homage, has had power to break the spell you cast about my spirit. You were the hero of my youthful dreams—my god on earth. When I was poor, despised, degraded, you were kind. I was lonely and unprotected—you respected me. For that my soul went forth in gratitude, and my heart in yearning. Fame could not wear this out.

"Yes, I love you," she went on in lower accents; "but

what you ask, I will never give—and were you wholly generous, you would not ask it! What! give up my career, my art, my work, to which I owe freedom, independence, self-respect—even the expression of your love?” she said, raising her eyes for one moment, while the light flashed from them, and her lips curled. “No; that you have no right to demand.”

“Rosa!” he cried, in tones that thrilled her soul, “Rosa, from your lips have fallen the sweetest words that my ears will ever know. You have told me that you love me. Surely, a woman who truly loves would not willingly see her lover humbled before her eyes, dragged about like a slave attached to her triumphal car—to hear the world’s applause sound nightly in his ears—of her whom he would wish to keep sacred from the vulgar gaze! To know that his beloved was not wholly and solely his! That the public *ennui* laid claim to her as an amusing toy! No, never! the humiliation would be too great—too bitter! I could not bear it! Rosa, come with me; let us go far away. I have a fortune ample enough to satisfy the pride of any woman. You have fought the great battle of life, and have won it; let that suffice.”

“Not so,” she answered, with quivering lips; “not so. I will not forsake the path which I marked out for myself. I traced it with my own hand, and I will tread in it to my grave.”

“Then we must part,” said Mr. Livingstone, proudly. Her voice did not waver. “Then we must part! Be it so!” she said.

“For God’s sake, Rosa, let not pride divide us! Is this your decision? Are you inexorable?”

"I am," she answered, firmly.

The branch of a tree broke near them. Some one was approaching. Rosa looked at Mr. Livingstone. "Signorina! Signorina Thornton!" rang out on the still air.

"Farewell, then," said Mr. Livingstone.

"Farewell!" returned Rosa, and he disappeared.

"Signorina! Great heaven! I thought you were lost. I have wandered everywhere in search of you. Let me put your mantle about you—the night is growing chill. How pale you are. You look a transfigured spirit in this ghostly light; as if you might easily have vanished from our sight. But you may be sure I shall not lose you again."

"Prince," said Rosa, "I am not well. The night air has chilled me. I feel faint. I will not return to the ball-room. Will you not take me quickly to the countess's carriage, and then call her? I must go home. Indeed, I cannot stay."

"Will you allow me to see you to-morrow?"

"Oh, yes; let me go now. Please take me to the countess."

"Lean on my arm," he said, and in considerable alarm, hurried his charge toward the front of the palace and placed her in the carriage.

"Will you," said Rosa, "kindly speak to the countess? Do not frighten her. Say only that I do not feel well."

When her chaperon arrived, however, Rosa was quite unconscious, but she soon revived, and entreated to be taken home.

On the following morning, the equipage of Prince Liciniano drew up at the door of Rosa's hotel, but the

Signorina Thornton was too ill to see any one. For a week, the prince's valet brought the rarest flowers to the young actress; on the eighth day he bore back his bouquet with the unwelcome intelligence that the young lady had gone to Lucerne with the Countess Malaspina — no better, no worse.

Meanwhile, Rosa, who had been tenderly watched by Helena, watched with equal solicitude the change which had crept over her friend's features. The restless look was less frequent now, and at times there was an expression almost of peace on the countess's face; but there was a transparency in her complexion, an evanescence in her look, which excited in Rosa deep anxiety. Often she was filled with remorse when she looked at her. She feared that in her great trouble she had forgotten Helena's; she felt that had she dwelt less upon her own sorrow, she might have ministered more to her.

Then, again, she would almost entirely forget Helena, and the memory of Ernest's last farewell to her would ring in her ears. Had she been cruel to him? She knew too well herself the pangs of an unreturned love. No; he was sure of her love; she had told him of it; only in the whirl and turmoil of her own feelings that night, she could scarcely recall what she had said. Was it not a heartless thing that she had done? He had laid down his life at her feet, and she had spurned it. She had told him that she preferred the world's homage to his devotion. Oh, how her heart ached and ached.

"I love him," she would murmur, as she laid her head wearily on her pillow, at night. "I love him better than my life, and yet I have chosen a cold career, that will return me nothing; but, no, I was right, I could not yield

to him ; oh, how gladly I would have yielded. But now it is finished ; the die is cast. It is true that he could not well have been my husband. I should not, perhaps, have respected him so much, had he been willing to sacrifice everything to me. Ah, my God ! why did I ever see him ? Why do those who put no conditions on their love, never move me ? He was right, when he said, ‘ It is in vain that we struggle with our destiny.’ Where is he now ? Perhaps he will go back to Mary. Oh, everything is pressing on my brain, and sometimes I think I shall go mad ! ”

CHAPTER XXXIII.



THE spring and summer had come and gone. The leaves had fallen from the trees; travelers shuddered at the dreary prospect around them, and hurried away from the place where their feet had trodden so merrily a few weeks before — still Helena and Rosa lingered in Lucerne.

Rosa had entered into an engagement with Salvini for the 1st of November. They were to open the season at Turin, but Rosa looked wearily forward to her new appearance before the public.

Helena grew daily weaker and weaker. She strove in vain to conceal it from Rosa, but Rosa could not be deceived. Over Helena's beautiful face there seemed at times to have fallen a sacred light, as if the gates of eternity had half opened and shed their radiance upon it. When she saw Rosa's eyes fixed earnestly upon her, she would turn away her face, as if it pained her.

"Rosa," she said, one day, as they sat in the deepening twilight, "Rosa, I have many things to say to you; come and sit by me, and hold my hand in yours."

Rosa drew near to her, and took her hand in both of hers—it was cold to the touch; Rosa started.

"Darling," said Helena, in tones Rosa had never heard from her before, "do not start, I shall not be long with you; I am going to him—to my early love—to Mimo.

You have been an angel to me. You came and stood between his grave and me; you lifted up my heart to God; you taught me how to pray; it was your young, fresh love that first stopped the weary aching here. I thought there was no pardon for me; but you told me that God was merciful; he has been merciful to me.

"Last night, Rosa," she said, her voice growing strangely hollow as she continued—"last night, Mimo came and smiled on me; I saw his face, as of old—not that one—not the terrible mask of disease and corruption he once wore,—he was radiant in beauty, and he opened his arms to me, and said, 'Helena, I love thee; not because thou art beautiful, but because thou hast been good to the unhappy, to the poor, and to the sick.' And I answered,

"'Mimo, canst thou forgive me my fatal sin against thee?' and he said,

"'Helena, if God smote me through thee, it was well.'

"Oh, Rosa, my beloved child, I believe in the immortality of the soul, because of the awful agony that sin brings. The body is sweet; it breathes of the things of this earth. The perfume of flowers, and the sunlight and song are the body's banquet; but the soul's suffering—that grows into God's light through pain.

"I know there is a God. God means eternal goodness: a God cannot create us, and suddenly, as by a caprice, erase our lives. That we may see his Godhead, we suffer such remorse, such misery, as washes out our sin and gives us sight—true repentance. I mean not that which is wrung from us through fear, nor yet through hope; only that which comes through infinite sorrow has the seal of God's forgiveness.

"God is just, but he is infinitely merciful. Rosa, he has wiped away my tears; he has given me back my Mimo; he is a tender father, who loves, even through his child's perversity; he will take me away from the fever of this earth to his living springs of love, and at length I shall find repose and rest." She paused—Rosa's sobs broke the silence.

"And what shall I do?" Rosa at length said, when she could speak, raising her friend's pale hand to her cheek, wet with tears. "What will become of me? Helena, I am alone; without you, life would be insupportable. Oh, my friend, who will watch over me, care for me, help me? It was for your smile of approval that my heart beat high, it was to perfect myself in your eyes that I studied; you raised me out of myself, and without you, of late," she said, breaking down in her grief, "I should not have been able to go through with what I have done. Helena! I loved—yes, I have concealed everything from you—for years I loved him; at last, I saw him again—he, too, loved me, but he would have had me renounce my career, give up my profession, turn from all that had ennobled my life—and I would not."

"You were right," said Helena. Then she added, in lower tones, "Yet the beautiful, even when incarnate in art, will pass away; but love is immortal!"

"Ah," said Rosa, covering her face with her hands, "that is what he said; those were his words, Helena, and I—I threw away the immortal part! All day long, one weary question racks me, 'Was it my pride that stood between us—have I flung away my all of earthly happiness for pride?'"

"I received to-day a letter from America, from my

friend, Mary Marlboro. She speaks of him; she knew he loved me; she says she hears that he has taken his passage for home; that he sailed the last of September. September has passed now, and I shall never see him again. Helena, tell me, what shall I do, with all these years that stretch out before me? I am so young—without love, how can I live? Oh, Helena,” she cried, and Helena felt the hot blood rushing to Rosa’s face, as she pressed it with her icy hands, “I am an Italian girl; I cannot assume indifference; I cannot forget: I have tried. I sought society, it gave me no relief—the world disappoints, and thwarts me.”

“Yes,” said Helena, “that is the saddest thing in life; everybody disappoints us—not everybody, Rosa! You never disappointed me, my child. It was the human part of our Saviour’s nature which asked, ‘Have I been so long with you, and have ye not known me?’ This is the heart-rending cry which is wrung from every soul. However imperfect one may be, yet there are within most of us, depths, aspirations, beliefs, truths, which we feel have a right to be understood, and nobody wholly comprehends them.

“In one sense, everybody is a Judas, and betrays us with a kiss; but yet we must not despair; there is a divine chord which binds us to humanity. There is one great heart which palpitates and heaves throughout the world, and beats in unison with every other; it ministers to the poor; it gathers the little ones under its wing, and teaches them that ‘of such is the kingdom of heaven’; it loves universally; it rays with the prayer of faith; it is God in us, and it cannot die.

“As for you, Rosa, I can say no more than this: true

love is rare—if it be true, it cannot pass away; if it blossom not in this world, I believe it will hereafter. Time is fleeting, Eternity is forever. If love is not true, it matters not how soon it perishes. Be patient, wait and believe!”

“I will try,” said Rosa, as she bowed her head, and kissed her friend’s hands. “I will try. I will seek to believe that what is, is for the best—that is the faith that tries men’s souls. I will strive after it. But, Helena, promise me that you will stay with me, that you will not leave me alone.”

“Alone, Rosa, you will never be. My spirit will watch over you. I fear not for you.”

A new anxiety now pressed on Rosa’s heart. She feared for her friend. The thought of losing her whom she so dearly loved, was full of inexpressible anguish to her. She saw herself wandering again like a lonely spirit through the world. “Ever alone, ever alone,” she repeated to herself, as she used to in those days gone by, from whose memory she shrank; but yet for Helena’s sake she could not pray that she might be left to her. She longed to know that she might be at rest, her spirit freed from this earth’s pains.

The season was bleak and dreary. Rosa seldom ventured out, but sat all day by Helena’s side, watching her with a daughter’s fond devotion.

“Go, Rosa,” Helena said to her one day, “there is a glimmer of sunshine outside; it will do you good to take a little walk; but be sure that you bring me back a ray of light when you come; it will do us both good.”

Rosa looked beseechingly at her friend, as if to say, “Do not send me from you!”

"Go my child," repeated Helena, "you must not sit moping in the chilly house all day; it is not well either for the body, or for the soul; wrap yourself up warm."

Rosa drew her shawl about her, bent over Helena, kissed her, and went out.

The wind was blowing the autumn leaves in little gusts before her; they looked, she thought, like variegated birds flitting restlessly through the air.

"That is the way," she thought, "that our young dreams go; they grow brighter and brighter, then they fall to the ground, and when we would gather them to us again, they shrivel and turn to dust in our hands."

"And now, Helena, I see, is passing from me, she shines almost with an ethereal light which is going out before my very eyes, to leave me in the darkness; how evanescent was my castle of hope; it broke like a brilliant bubble in the air, while I was gazing at it."

She turned her steps toward the great rock where Canova's lion is hewn in the stone, and sat down before it.

"Oh strength!" she said, "how regal you are in your grand repose; your sleep is the sleep of fearlessness; how great is your rest! You dread no disturbance; the elements may crash around you; you are stronger than they, you rest on your arms, the battle is done."

A tiny bird flew by her; he lighted for a moment on one of the lion's claws.

"Sweet thing," she said, "in your tender faith, you fear no more than he. God protects the very weak, the strong protect themselves. It is only the miserable fighters who are without protection; they have yet their armor to win."

She sat still, and watched the clouds breaking above her, and the sunlight struggling through them. A foot-fall sounded near her; it was a lonely place; she sprang to her feet. The stranger approached. Good God! she could not be mistaken! She trembled in every fibre of her body.

"Rosa," he said, in those tones so well known to her, "thank God I have found you! Dearest, speak to me. I have come to throw myself at your feet, and ask for pity and pardon. I have come, Rosa, to say, be merciful! Oh, tell me that I have not come in vain."

She put out her hand to him in silence; he caught it in his own.

"Sorrow has taught me one lesson," he said, "that love, true love is untarnished with selfishness, that it makes no conditions, but gives freely; it is true love I bring you—does it come too late?"

"Can blessings come too late?" she said.

"Rosa! Rosa! do you love me?"

"I do," she whispered. He drew her nearer to him. She did not struggle now.

"Is your love mine, Rosa—mine for this world, and the next?"

"All yours," she murmured; "this world I gladly renounce; you have given me the greatest proof of love a man can give. My heart was never in the world's empty applause, only I thought you did not wholly love me, if you asked of me what you believed to be so great a sacrifice—and—and I loved my art."

"It shall still be yours, Rosa. I will not rob you of it."

"No; let it never rise again between us. Mary wrote

me," she said, blushing deeply, "that you had sailed back to America. I thought that you had gone—that I had lost you forever—and—and—then I almost learned to hate my art."

"Did that give you pain, my beloved?"

She turned away her head. After a moment's pause, she said :

"Let us go. Helena will miss me ; she will be frightened." Then, turning to him, she looked up pleadingly in his face. "Let us go, Mr. Livingstone."

"Say, 'Ernest,' and I will follow you the world over."

"I cannot."

"Then I cannot stir from this spot."

"Mr. Livingstone, oh, please do not torment me ; she will be so anxious."

"Say 'Ernest' once ; it will not delay us a second."

"Not now. Helena is waiting for me."

"Do you love her better than you love me?"

"I love her dearly. Let me go to her."

"Not yet ; you are in my power. I am the stronger."

"Ernest," she whispered, "dear Ernest—will you come now?"

"Oh, sweetest sound ! Once again, dearest, let me hear it."

"No ; not until it is spoken in *her* presence."

They hurried on. Rosa had taken his arm. On her lips played the smile of youth and perfect happiness.

How lonely her life had seemed half an hour ago. Then the air was filled with all the dreary sadness of autumn ; now it seemed to breathe the bright promises of spring.

"How sweet and soft the air is," she said.

"It is to me, my beloved."

"Helena will love you for my sake," she said.

"Surely not for my own."

"No; only for mine. You will do everything to make her happy, will you not, Ernest?"

"Your friends are mine, darling." Then, after a pause,

"Would you like to live in America, Rosa?"

"Yes, if she might come."

"We will live anywhere that you choose, Rosa; where the loved one is, there is home."

"We will wander, like happy spirits, hand in hand, for a time," she said; "and when we are weary, we will build our nest in America."

"Once I remember hearing you say that the thought of living always in America made you sad."

"All is changed now," she said. "I would rather live there than anywhere in the world. But what will you do with your little circus-rider there?"

"I will show her to all the world, as one of the best and noblest things in it."

"And not be a whit ashamed of her?"

"I shall rather fear to fall by the sin of the angels—too much pride."

Rosa laughed. "If man ever falls at all, it is sure to be as an angel," she said.

They reached the hotel. Rosa glanced up at the windows.

"She has not been anxious," she said, "or she would be watching for me."

She went in quickly. Ernest followed her up-stairs. Rosa paused at Helena's door.

"May I come in?" she said, in a gay, laughing voice.

She turned the latch.

"May we come in?" she repeated.

There was no answer. Rosa opened the door. Helena was seated by the table; there was a sweet smile on her lips.

"I have brought him, Helena!" she began, eagerly; "he may come in, may he not?"

She left the door open, and entered hastily. Ernest followed. Helena did not stir; the twilight was just beginning to deepen in the room. Suddenly Rosa uttered a shrill scream.

"Ernest! Ernest!—*she does not move!* Oh, God, she does not move!"

He came up quickly; his voice trembled.

"She is dead," he said.

"Oh, Ernest," her voice came broken by her passionate sobs, "she looks as if she had been happy. See what a sweet smile she wears."

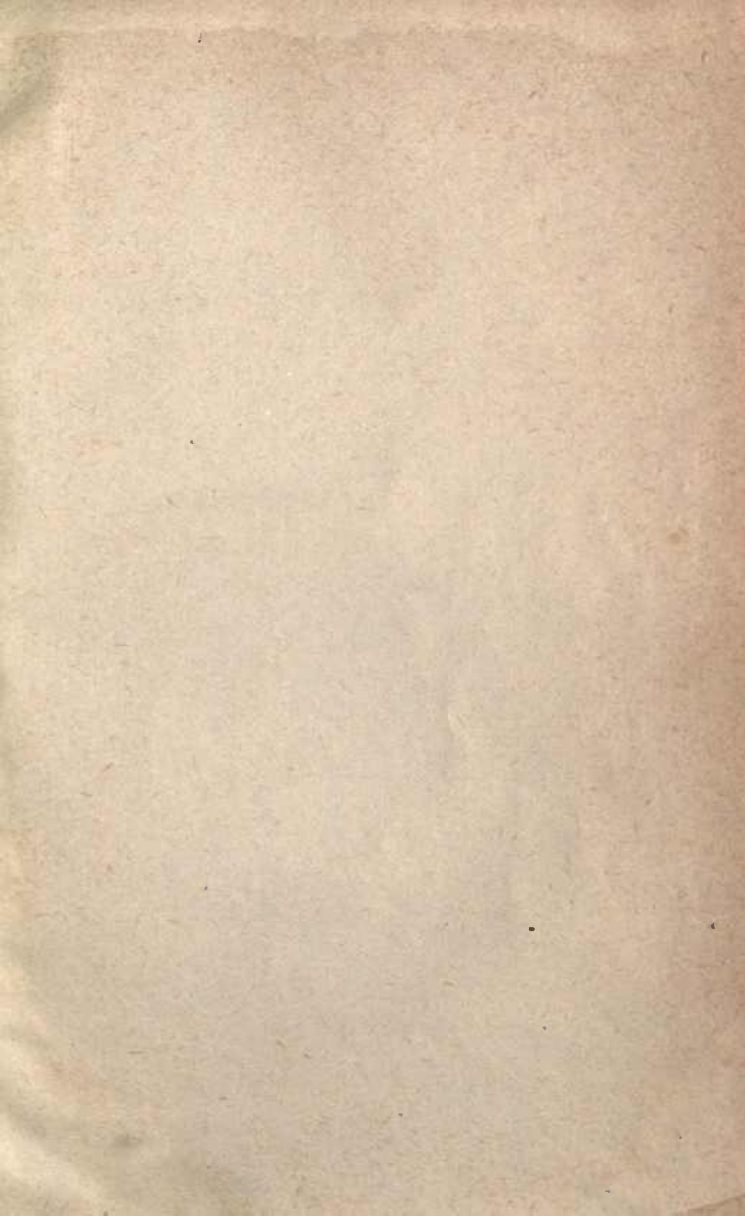
"She seems to bless our love," he whispered, as he knelt by Rosa's side.

The poor girl wrung her hands.

"Oh, Helena!" she cried, "speak to me!—But one word!" Her head sank on the shoulder of her lover. "God has been merciful to us both! He has taken her to himself! And he has given me you, Ernest!"

FINIS.





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